THE MONK:

A

ROMANCE.

By M. G. LEWIS, Esq. M. P.

IN THREE VOLUMES.—VOL. II.

Somnia, terrores magicos, miracula, ſagas,
Nocturnos lemures, portentaque.

HORAT.

Dreams, magic terrors, ſpells of mighty power,
Witches, and ghoſts who rove at midnight hour.

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M.DCC.XCVI.

MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

THE MONK.

CHAP. IV.

Avaunt! and quit my ſight! Let the earth hide thee!
Thy bones are marrowleſs; thy blood is cold;
Thou haſt no ſpeculation in thoſe eyes
Which thou doſt glare with! Hence, horrible ſhadow!
Unreal mockery, hence!

MACBETH.

CONTINUATION OF THE HISTORY OF DON RAYMOND.

My journey was uncommonly agreeable. I found the baron a man of ſome ſenſe, but little knowledge of the world. He had paſſed a great part of his life without ſtirring beyond the precincts of his own

domains, and conſequently his manners were far from being the moſt poliſhed; but he was hearty, good-humoured, and friendly. His attention to me was all that I could wiſh, and I had every reaſon to be ſatisfied with his behaviour. His ruling paſſion was hunting, which he had brought himſelf to conſider as a ſerious occupation; and, when talking over ſome remarkable chace, he treated the ſubject with as much gravity as if it had been a battle on which the fate of two kingdoms was depending. I happened to be a tolerable ſportſman: ſoon after my arrival at Lindenberg, I gave ſome proofs of my dexterity. The baron immediately marked me down for a man of genius, and vowed to me an eternal friendſhip.

That friendſhip was become to me by no means indifferent. At the caſtle of Lindenberg, I beheld for the firſt time your ſiſter, the lovely Agnes. For me, whoſe heart was unoccupied, and who grieved at the void, to ſee her and to love her were the ſame. I found in Agnes all that was requiſite

ſite to ſecure my affection. She was then ſcarcely ſixteen; her perſon light and elegant was already formed; ſhe poſſeſſed ſeveral talents in perfection, particularly thoſe of muſic and drawing: her character was gay, open, and good-humoured; and the graceful ſimplicity of her dreſs and manners formed an advantageous contraſt to the art and ſtudied coquetry of the Pariſian dames, whom I had juſt quitted. From the moment that I beheld her, I felt the moſt lively intereſt in her fate. I made many enquiries reſpecting her of the baroneſs.

"She is my niece," replied that lady; "you are ſtill ignorant, Don Alphonſo, that I am your country-woman. I am ſiſter to the duke of Medina Celi. Agnes is the daughter of my ſecond brother, Don Gaſton: ſhe has been deſtined to the convent from her cradle, and will ſoon make her profeſſion at Madrid."

[Here Lorenzo interrupted the marquis by an exclamation of ſurpriſe.

"Intended for the convent from her cradle!" ſaid he: "By heaven, this is the firſt word that I ever heard of ſuch a deſign."

"I believe it, my dear Lorenzo," anſwered Don Raymond; "but you muſt liſten to me with patience. You will not be leſs ſurpriſed, when I relate ſome particulars of your family ſtill unknown to you, and which I have learnt from the mouth of Agnes herſelf."

He then reſumed his narrative as follows:]

You cannot but be aware, that your parents were unfortunately ſlaves to the groſſeſt ſuperſtition: when this foible was called into play, their every other ſentiment, their every other paſſion, yielded to its irreſiſtible ſtrength. While ſhe was big with Agnes, your mother was ſeized by a dangerous illneſs, and given over by her phyſicians. In this ſituation Donna Ineſilla vowed, that if ſhe recovered from her malady, the child then living in her boſom, if a girl, ſhould be dedicated to St. Clare; if a boy, to St. Benedict.

Benedict. Her prayers were heard; she got rid of her complaint; Agnes entered the world alive, and was immediately destined to the service of St. Clare.

Don Gaston readily chimed in with his lady's wishes: but knowing the sentiments of the duke, his brother, respecting a monastic life, it was determined that your sister's destination should be carefully concealed from him. The better to guard the secret, it was resolved that Agnes should accompany her aunt, Donna Rodolpha, into Germany, whither that lady was on the point of following her new-married husband, baron Lindenberg. On her arrival at that estate, the young Agnes was put into a convent, situated but a few miles from the castle. The nuns, to whom her education was confided, performed their charge with exactitude: they made her a perfect mistress of many accomplishments, and strove to infuse into her mind a taste for the retirement and tranquil pleasures of a convent. But a secret instinct made the young recluse sensible

that ſhe was not born for ſolitude: in all the freedom of youth and gaiety, ſhe ſcrupled not to treat as ridiculous many ceremonies which the nuns regarded with awe; and ſhe was never more happy than when her lively imagination inſpired her with ſome ſcheme to plague the ſtiff lady abbeſs, or the ugly ill-tempered old portereſs. She looked with diſguſt upon the proſpect before her: however, no alternative was offered to her, and ſhe ſubmitted to the decree of her parents, though not without ſecret repining.

That repugnance ſhe had not art enough to conceal long: Don Gaſton was informed of it. Alarmed, Lorenzo, leſt your affection for her ſhould oppoſe itſelf to his projects, and leſt you ſhould poſitively object to your ſiſter's miſery, he reſolved to keep the whole affair from *your* knowledge as well as the duke's, till the ſacrifice ſhould be conſummated. The ſeaſon of her taking the veil was fixed for the time when you ſhould be upon your travels: in the mean while no hint was dropped of Donna Ineſilla's

ſilla's fatal vow. Your ſiſter was never permitted to know your direction. All your letters were read before ſhe received them, and thoſe parts effaced which were likely to nouriſh her inclination for the world: her anſwers were dictated either by her aunt, or by dame Cunegonda, her governeſs. Theſe particulars I learnt partly from Agnes, partly from the baroneſs herſelf.

I immediately determined upon reſcuing this lovely girl from a fate ſo contrary to her inclinations, and ill ſuited to her merit. I endeavoured to ingratiate myſelf into her favour; I boaſted of my friendſhip and intimacy with you. She liſtened to me with avidity; ſhe ſeemed to devour my words while I ſpoke in your praiſe, and her eyes thanked me for my affection to her brother. My conſtant and unremitted attention at length gained me her heart, and with difficulty I obliged her to confeſs that ſhe loved me. When, however, I propoſed her

quitting the caſtle of Lindenberg, ſhe rejected the idea in poſitive terms.

" Be generous, Alphonſo," ſhe ſaid; " you poſſeſs my heart, but uſe not the gift ignobly. Employ not your aſcendancy over me in perſuading me to take a ſtep at which I ſhould hereafter have to bluſh. I am young and deſerted: my brother, my only friend, is ſeparated from me, and my other relations act with me as my enemies. Take pity on my unprotected ſituation. Inſtead of ſeducing me to an action which would cover me with ſhame, ſtrive rather to gain the affections of thoſe who govern me. The baron eſteems you. My aunt, to others ever harſh, proud, and contemptuous, remembers that you reſcued her from the hands of murderers, and wears with you alone the appearance of kindneſs and benignity. Try then your influence over my guardians. If they conſent to our union, my hand is yours. From your account of my brother, I cannot doubt your obtaining

his

his approbation: and when they find the impoſſibility of executing their deſign, I truſt that my parents will excuſe my diſobedience, and expiate by ſome other ſacrifice my mother's fatal vow."

From the firſt moment that I beheld Agnes, I had endeavoured to conciliate the favour of her relations. Authoriſed by the confeſſion of her regard, I redoubled my exertions. My principal battery was directed againſt the baroneſs: it was eaſy to diſcover, that her word was law in the caſtle: her huſband paid her the moſt abſolute ſubmiſſion, and conſidered her as a ſuperior being. She was about forty: in her youth ſhe had been a beauty; but her charms had been upon that large ſcale which can but ill ſuſtain the ſhock of years: however, ſhe ſtill poſſeſſed ſome remains of them. Her underſtanding was ſtrong and excellent when not obſcured by prejudice, which unluckily was but ſeldom the caſe. Her paſſions were violent: ſhe ſpared no pains to gratify them, and purſued with unremitting

vengeance thoſe who oppoſed themſelves to her wiſhes. The warmeſt of friends, the moſt inveterate of enemies, ſuch was the baroneſs Lindenberg.

I laboured inceſſantly to pleaſe her: unluckily I ſucceeded but too well. She ſeemed gratified by my attention, and treated me with a diſtinction accorded by her to no one elſe. One of my daily occupations was reading to her for ſeveral hours: thoſe hours I ſhould much rather have paſſed with Agnes; but as I was conſcious that complaiſance for her aunt would advance our union, I ſubmitted with a good grace to the penance impoſed upon me. Donna Rodolpha's library was principally compoſed of old Spaniſh romances: theſe were her favourite ſtudies, and once a day one of theſe unmerciful volumes was put regularly into my hands. I read the weariſome adventures of "*Perceforeſt*," "*Tirante the White*," "*Palmerin of England*," and "*the Knight of the Sun*," till the book was on the point of falling from my hands through ennui.

ennui. However, the increaſing pleaſure which the baroneſs ſeemed to take in my ſociety, encouraged me to perſevere; and latterly ſhe ſhewed for me a partiality ſo marked, that Agnes adviſed me to ſeize the firſt opportunity of declaring our mutual paſſion to our aunt.

One evening I was alone with Donna Rodolpha, in her own apartment. As our readings generally treated of love, Agnes was never permitted to aſſiſt at them. I was juſt congratulating myſelf on having finiſhed "*the Loves of Triſtan and the Queen Iſeult*——"

"Ah! the unfortunates!" cried the baroneſs: "How ſay you, Segnor? Do you think it poſſible for man to feel an attachment ſo diſintereſted and ſincere?"

"I cannot doubt it," replied I; "my own heart furniſhes me with the certainty. Ah! Donna Rodolpha, might I but hope for your approbation of my love! might I but confeſs the name of my miſtreſs, without incurring your reſentment!"

She interrupted me.

"Suppoſe I were to ſpare you that confeſſion? Suppoſe I were to acknowledge that the object of your deſires is not unknown to me? Suppoſe I were to ſay, that ſhe returns your affection, and laments not leſs ſincerely than yourſelf the unhappy vows which ſeparate her from you?"

"Ah! Donna Rodolpha!" I exclaimed, throwing myſelf upon my knees before her, and preſſing her hand to my lips, "you have diſcovered my ſecret! What is your deciſion? Muſt I deſpair, or may I reckon upon your favour?"

She withdrew not the hand which I held; but ſhe turned from me, and covered her face with the other.

"How can I refuſe it you?" ſhe replied: "Ah! Don Alphonſo, I have long perceived to whom your attentions were directed, but till now I perceived not the impreſſion which they had made upon my heart. At length I can no longer hide my weakneſs either from myſelf or from you. I yield to

the violence of my paſſion, and own that I adore you! For three long months I ſtifled my deſires; but growing ſtronger by reſiſtance, I ſubmit to their impetuoſity. Pride, fear, and honour, reſpect for myſelf, and my engagements to the baron, all are vanquiſhed. I ſacrifice them to my love for you, and it ſtill ſeems to me that I pay too mean a price for your poſſeſſion."

She pauſed for an anſwer.—Judge, my Lorenzo, what muſt have been my confuſion at this diſcovery. I at once ſaw all the magnitude of this obſtacle, which I had myſelf raiſed to my happineſs. The baroneſs had placed thoſe attentions to her own account, which I had merely paid her for the ſake of Agnes: and the ſtrength of her expreſſions, the looks which accompanied them, and my knowledge of her revengeful diſpoſition, made me tremble for myſelf and my beloved. I was ſilent for ſome minutes. I knew not how to reply to her declaration: I could only reſolve to clear up the miſtake without delay, and

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for the preſent to conceal from her knowledge the name of my miſtreſs. No ſooner had ſhe avowed her paſſion, than the tranſports which before were evident in my features gave place to conſternation and conſtraint. I dropped her hand, and roſe from my knees. The change in my countenance did not eſcape her obſervation.

"What means this ſilence?" ſaid ſhe in a trembling voice: "Where is that joy which you led me to expect?"

"Forgive me, Segnora," I anſwered, "if what neceſſity forces from me ſhould ſeem harſh and ungrateful. To encourage you in an error, which, however it may flatter myſelf, muſt prove to you the ſource of diſappointment, would make me appear criminal in every eye. Honour obliges me to inform you, that you have miſtaken for the ſolicitude of love what was only the attention of friendſhip. The latter ſentiment is that which I wiſhed to excite in your boſom: to entertain a warmer, reſpect for you forbids me, and gratitude for the

baron's

baron's generous treatment. Perhaps theſe reaſons would not be ſufficient to ſhield me from your attractions, were it not that my affections are already beſtowed upon another. You have charms, Segnora, which might captivate the moſt inſenſible; no heart unoccupied could reſiſt them. Happy is it for me, that mine is no longer in my poſſeſſion, or I ſhould have to reproach myſelf for ever with having violated the laws of hoſpitality. Recollect yourſelf, noble lady! recollect what is owed by you to honour, by me to the baron, and replace by eſteem and friendſhip thoſe ſentiments which I never can return."

The baroneſs turned pale at this unexpected and poſitive declaration: ſhe doubted whether ſhe ſlept or woke. At length recovering from her ſurpriſe, conſternation gave place to rage, and the blood ruſhed back into her cheeks with violence.

"Villain!" ſhe cried; "Monſter of deceit! Thus is the avowal of my love received? Is it thus that . . . . but, no, no! it cannot,

cannot, it ſhall not be! Alphonſo, behold me at your feet! Be witneſs of my deſpair! Look with pity on a woman who loves you with ſincere affection! She who poſſeſſes your heart, how has ſhe merited ſuch a treaſure? What ſacrifice has ſhe made to you? What raiſes her above Rodolpha?"

I endeavoured to lift her from her knees.

"For God's ſake, Segnora, reſtrain theſe tranſports; they diſgrace yourſelf and me. Your exclamations may be heard, and your ſecret divulged to your attendants. I ſee that my preſence only irritates you: permit me to retire."

I prepared to quit the apartment: the baroneſs caught me ſuddenly by the arm.

"And who is this happy rival?" ſaid ſhe in a menacing tone; "I will know her name, and *when* I know it.....! She is ſome one in my power; you entreated my favour, my protection! Let me but find her, let me but know who dares to rob me of your heart, and ſhe ſhall ſuffer every torment which jealouſy and diſappointment

can

can inflict. Who is ſhe? Anſwer me this moment. Hope not to conceal her from my vengeance! Spies ſhall be ſet over you; every ſtep, every look ſhall be watched; your eyes will diſcover my rival; I ſhall know her; and when ſhe is found, tremble, Alphonſo, for her and for yourſelf."

As ſhe uttered theſe laſt words, her fury mounted to ſuch a pitch as to ſtop her powers of reſpiration. She panted, groaned, and at length fainted away. As ſhe was falling I caught her in my arms, and placed her upon a ſopha. Then haſtening to the door, I ſummoned her women to her aſſiſtance; I committed her to their care, and ſeized the opportunity of eſcaping.

Agitated and confuſed beyond expreſſion, I bent my ſteps towards the garden. The benignity with which the baroneſs had liſtened to me at firſt, raiſed my hopes to the higheſt pitch: I imagined her to have perceived my attachment for her niece, and to approve of it. Extreme was my diſappointment at underſtanding the true pur-

port

port of her diſcourſe. I knew not what courſe to take: the ſuperſtition of the parents of Agnes, aided by her aunt's unfortunate paſſion, ſeemed to oppoſe ſuch obſtacles to our union as were almoſt inſurmountable.

As I paſſed by a low parlour, whoſe windows looked into the garden, through the door which ſtood half open I obſerved Agnes ſeated at a table. She was occupied in drawing, and ſeveral unfiniſhed ſketches were ſcattered round her. I entered, ſtill undetermined whether I ſhould acquaint her with the declaration of the baroneſs.

"Oh! is it only you? ſaid ſhe, raiſing her head: "You are no ſtranger, and I ſhall continue my occupation without ceremony. Take a chair, and ſeat yourſelf by me."

I obeyed, and placed myſelf near the table. Unconſcious what I was doing, and totally occupied by the ſcene which had juſt paſſed, I took up ſome of the drawings,

and

and caſt my eyes over them. One of the ſubjects ſtruck me from its ſingularity. It repreſented the great hall of the caſtle of Lindenberg. A door conducting to a narrow ſtair-caſe ſtood half open. In the foreground appeared a group of figures, placed in the moſt groteſque attitudes; terror was expreſſed upon every countenance. Here was one upon his knees, with his eyes caſt up to heaven, and praying moſt devoutly; there, another was creeping away upon all fours. Some hid their faces in their cloaks, or the laps of their companions; ſome had concealed themſelves beneath a table, on which the remnants of a feaſt were viſible; while others, with gaping mouths and eyes wide-ſtretched, pointed to a figure ſuppoſed to have created this diſturbance. It repreſented a female of more than human ſtature, clothed in the habit of ſome religious order. Her face was veiled; on her arm hung a chaplet of beads; her dreſs was in ſeveral places ſtained with the blood which

trickled

trickled from a wound upon her boſom. In one hand ſhe held a lamp, in the other a large knife, and ſhe ſeemed advancing towards the iron gates of the hall.

"What does this mean, Agnes?" ſaid I: "Is this ſome invention of your own?"

She caſt her eyes upon the drawing.

"Oh! no," ſhe replied: "'tis the invention of much wiſer heads than mine. But can you poſſibly have lived at Lindenberg for three whole months without hearing of the bleeding nun?"

"You are the firſt who ever mentioned the name to me. Pray, who may the lady be?"

"That is more than I can pretend to tell you. All my knowledge of her hiſtory comes from an old tradition in this family, which has been handed down from father to ſon, and is firmly credited throughout the baron's domains. Nay, the baron believes it himſelf; and as for my aunt, who has a natural turn for the marvellous, ſhe would

ſooner

ſooner doubt the veracity of the Bible than of the bleeding nun. Shall I tell you this hiſtory?"

I anſwered, that ſhe would oblige me much by relating it: ſhe reſumed her drawing, and then proceeded as follows in a tone of burleſqued gravity:

"It is ſurpriſing that in all the chronicles of paſt times this remarkable perſonage is never once mentioned. Fain would I recount to you her life; but unluckily till after her death ſhe was never known to have exiſted. Then firſt did ſhe think it neceſſary to make ſome noiſe in the world, and with that intention ſhe made bold to ſeize upon the caſtle of Lindenberg. Having a good taſte, ſhe took up her abode in the beſt room of the houſe; and once eſtabliſhed there, ſhe began to amuſe herſelf by knocking about the tables and chairs in the middle of the night. Perhaps ſhe was a bad ſleeper, but this I have never been able to aſcertain. According to the tradition, this entertainment commenced about a century

a century ago. It was accompanied with ſhrieking, howling, groaning, ſwearing, and many other agreeable noiſes of the ſame kind. But though one particular room was more eſpecially honoured with her viſits, ſhe did not entirely confine herſelf to it. She occaſionally ventured into the old galleries, paced up and down the ſpacious halls; or, ſometimes ſtopping at the doors of the chambers, ſhe wept and wailed there to the univerſal terror of the inhabitants. In theſe nocturnal excurſions ſhe was ſeen by different people, who all deſcribe her appearance as you behold it here traced by the hand of her unworthy hiſtorian."

The ſingularity of this account inſenſibly engaged my attention.

"Did ſhe never ſpeak to thoſe who met her?" ſaid I.

"Not ſhe. The ſpecimens indeed which ſhe gave nightly of her talents for converſation, were by no means inviting. Sometimes the caſtle rung with oaths and execrations:

tions: a moment after ſhe repeated her paternoſter: now ſhe howled out the moſt horrible blaſphemies, and then chaunted De profundis as orderly as if ſtill in the choir. In ſhort, ſhe ſeemed a mighty capricious being: but whether ſhe prayed or curſed, whether ſhe was impious or devout, ſhe always contrived to terrify her auditors out of their ſenſes. The caſtle became ſcarcely habitable; and its lord was ſo frightened by theſe midnight revels, that one fine morning he was found dead in his bed. This ſucceſs ſeemed to pleaſe the nun mightily, for now ſhe made more noiſe than ever. But the next baron proved too cunning for her. He made his appearance with a celebrated exorciſer in his hand, who feared not to ſhut himſelf up for a night in the haunted chamber. There it ſeems that he had a hard battle with the ghoſt before ſhe would promiſe to be quiet. She was obſtinate, but he was more ſo; and at length ſhe conſented to let the inhabitants of the caſtle take a good night's reſt.

For

For ſome time after no news was heard of her. But at the end of five years the exorciſer died, and then the nun ventured to peep abroad again. However, ſhe was now grown much more tractable and well-behaved. She walked about in ſilence, and never made her appearance above once in five years. This cuſtom, if you will believe the baron, ſhe ſtill continues. He is fully perſuaded, that on the fifth of May of every fifth year, as ſoon as the clock ſtrikes one, the door of the haunted chamber opens. [Obſerve, that this room has been ſhut up for near a century.] Then out walks the ghoſtly nun with her lamp and dagger: ſhe deſcends the ſtair-caſe of the eaſtern tower, and croſſes the great hall. On that night the porter always leaves the gates of the caſtle open, out of reſpect to the apparition: not that this is thought by any means neceſſary, ſince ſhe could eaſily whip through the key-hole if ſhe choſe it: but merely out of politeneſs, and to prevent her from making her exit in a way ſo dero-

derogatory to the dignity of her ghoſt-ſhip."

"And whither does ſhe go on quitting the caſtle?"

"To heaven, I hope; but if ſhe does, the place certainly is not to her taſte, for ſhe always returns after an hour's abſence. The lady then retires to her chamber, and is quiet for another five years."

"And you believe this, Agnes?"

"How can you aſk ſuch a queſtion? No, no, Alphonſo! I have too much reaſon to lament ſuperſtition's influence to be its victim myſelf. However, I muſt not avow my incredulity to the baroneſs: ſhe entertains not a doubt of the truth of this hiſtory. As to dame Cunegonda, my governeſs, ſhe proteſts that fifteen years ago ſhe ſaw the ſpectre with her own eyes. She related to me one evening, how ſhe and ſeveral other domeſtics had been terrified while at ſupper by the appearance of the bleeding nun, as the ghoſt is called in the caſtle: 'tis from her account that I drew this ſketch, and

you may be certain that Cunegonda was not omitted. There ſhe is! I ſhall never forget what a paſſion ſhe was in, and how ugly ſhe looked while ſhe ſcolded me for having made her picture ſo like herſelf!"

Here ſhe pointed to a burleſque figure of an old woman in an attitude of terror.

In ſpite of the melancholy which oppreſſed me, I could not help ſmiling at the playful imagination of Agnes: ſhe had perfectly preſerved dame Cunegonda's reſemblance, but had ſo much exaggerated every fault, and rendered every feature ſo irreſiſtibly laughable, that I could eaſily conceive the duenna's anger.

"The figure is admirable, my dear Agnes! I knew not that you poſſeſſed ſuch talents for the ridiculous."

"Stay a moment," ſhe replied; "I will ſhew you a figure ſtill more ridiculous than dame Cunegonda's. If it pleaſes you, you may diſpoſe of it as ſeems beſt to yourſelf."

She roſe, and went to a cabinet at ſome little

little distance: unlocking a drawer, she took out a small case, which she opened, and presented to me.

"Do you know the resemblance?" said she, smiling.

It was her own.

Transported at the gift, I pressed the portrait to my lips with passion: I threw myself at her feet, and declared my gratitude in the warmest and most affectionate terms. She listened to me with complaisance, and assured me that she shared my sentiments; when suddenly she uttered a loud shriek, disengaged the hand which I held, and flew from the room by a door which opened to the garden. Amazed at this abrupt departure, I rose hastily from my knees. I beheld with confusion the baroness standing near me, glowing with jealousy, and almost choaked with rage. On recovering from her swoon, she had tortured her imagination to discover her concealed rival. No one appeared to deserve her suspicions more than Agnes. She

immediately haſtened to find her niece, tax her with encouraging my addreſſes, and aſſure herſelf whether her conjectures were well-grounded. Unfortunately ſhe had already ſeen enough to need no other confirmation. She arrived at the door of the room, at the preciſe moment when Agnes gave me her portrait. She heard me profeſs an everlaſting attachment to her rival, and ſaw me kneeling at her feet. She advanced to ſeparate us; we were too much occupied by each other to perceive her approach, and were not aware of it till Agnes beheld her ſtanding by my ſide.

Rage on the part of Donna Rodolpha, embarraſſment on mine, for ſome time kept us both ſilent. The lady recovered herſelf firſt.

"My ſuſpicions then were juſt," ſaid ſhe; "the coquetry of my niece has triumphed, and 'tis to her that I am ſacrificed. In one reſpect, however, I am fortunate; I ſhall not be the only one who laments a diſappointed paſſion. You, too, ſhall know

what

what it is to love without hope! I daily expect orders for reſtoring Agnes to her parents. Immediately upon her arrival in Spain, ſhe will take the veil, and place an inſuperable barrier to your union. You may ſpare your ſupplications." She continued, perceiving me on the point of ſpeaking: "My reſolution is fixed and immoveable. Your miſtreſs ſhall remain a cloſe priſoner in her chamber, till ſhe exchanges this caſtle for the cloiſter. Solitude will perhaps recall her to a ſenſe of her duty: but to prevent your oppoſing that wiſhed event, I muſt inform you, Don Alphonſo, that your preſence here is no longer agreeable either to the baron or myſelf. It was not to talk nonſenſe to my niece, that your relations ſent you to Germany: your buſineſs was to travel, and I ſhould be ſorry to impede any longer ſo excellent a deſign. Farewell, Segnor; remember, that to-morrow morning we meet for the laſt time."

Having ſaid this, ſhe darted upon me a look of pride, contempt, and malice, and

quitted the apartment. I alſo retired to mine, and conſumed the night in planning the means of reſcuing Agnes from the power of her tyrannical aunt.

After the poſitive declaration of its miſtreſs, it was impoſſible for me to make a longer ſtay at the caſtle of Lindenberg. Accordingly, I the next day announced my immediate departure. The baron declared that it gave him ſincere pain; and he expreſſed himſelf in my favour ſo warmly, that I endeavoured to win him over to my intereſt. Scarcely had I mentioned the name of Agnes when he ſtopped me ſhort, and ſaid, that it was totally out of his power to interfere in the buſineſs. I ſaw that it was in vain to argue; the baroneſs governed her huſband with deſpotic ſway, and I eaſily perceived that ſhe had prejudiced him againſt the match. Agnes did not appear. I entreated permiſſion to take leave of her, but my prayer was rejected. I was obliged to depart without ſeeing her.

At quitting him, the baron ſhook my hand affection-

affectionately, and assured me that, as soon as his niece was gone, I might consider his house as my own.

"Farewell, Don Alphonso!" said the baroness, and stretched out her hand to me.

I took it, and offered to carry it to my lips. She prevented me. Her husband was at the other end of the room, and out of hearing.

"Take care of yourself," she continued; "my love is become hatred, and my wounded pride shall not be unatoned. Go where you will, my vengeance shall follow you!"

She accompanied these words with a look sufficient to make me tremble. I answered not, but hastened to quit the castle.

As my chaise drove out of the court, I looked up to the windows of your sister's chamber: nobody was to be seen there. I threw myself back despondent in my carriage. I was attended by no other servants than a Frenchman, whom I had hired

at Straſbourg in Stephano's room, and my little page, whom I before mentioned to you. The fidelity, intelligence, and good temper of Theodore had already made him dear to me; but he now prepared to lay an obligation on me, which made me look upon him as a guardian genius. Scarcely had we proceeded half a mile from the caſtle, when he rode up to the chaiſe door.

"Take courage, Segnor!" ſaid he in Spaniſh, which he had already learnt to ſpeak with fluency and correctneſs: "While you were with the baron, I watched the moment when dame Cunegonda was below ſtairs, and mounted into the chamber over that of donna Agnes. I ſang, as loud as I could, a little German air, well known to her, hoping that ſhe would recollect my voice. I was not diſappointed, for I ſoon heard her window open. I haſtened to let down a ſtring with which I had provided myſelf. Upon hearing the caſement cloſed again, I drew up the ſtring, and, faſtened to it, I found this ſcrap of paper."

He

He then preſented me with a ſmall note, addreſſed to me. I opened it with impatience. It contained the following words, written in pencil:

"Conceal yourſelf for the next fortnight "in ſome neighbouring village. My aunt "will believe you to have quitted Linden-"berg, and I ſhall be reſtored to liberty. I "will be in the weſt pavilion at twelve on "the night of the thirtieth. Fail not to be "there, and we ſhall have an opportunity "of concerting our future plans. Adieu.

"AGNES."

At peruſing theſe lines my tranſports exceeded all bounds; neither did I ſet any to the expreſſions of gratitude which I heaped upon Theodore. In fact, his addreſs and attention merited my warmeſt praiſe. You will readily believe that I had not entruſted him with my paſſion for Agnes; but the arch youth had too much diſcernment not to diſcover my ſecret, and too much diſcre-

tion not to conceal his knowledge of it. He obſerved in ſilence what was going on, no ſtrove to make himſelf an agent in the buſineſs till my intereſts required his interference. I equally admired his judgment, his penetration, his addreſs, and his fidelity. This was not the firſt occaſion in which I had found him of infinite uſe, and I was every day more convinced of his quickneſs and capacity. During my ſhort ſtay at Straſbourg, he had applied himſelf diligently to learning the rudiments of Spaniſh. He continued to ſtudy it, and with ſo much ſucceſs, that he ſpoke it with the ſame facility as his native language. He paſſed the greateſt part of his time in reading. He had acquired much information for his age; and united the advantages of a lively countenance and prepoſſeſſing figure to an excellent underſtanding and the very beſt of hearts. He is now fifteen. He is ſtill in my ſervice; and, when you ſee him, I am ſure that he will pleaſe you. But excuſe this digreſſion; I return to the ſubject which I quitted.

I obeyed

I obeyed the inſtructions of Agnes. I proceeded to Munich: there I left my chaiſe under the care of Lucas, my French ſervant, and then returned on horſeback to a ſmall village about four miles diſtant from the caſtle of Lindenberg. Upon arriving there, a ſtory was related to the hoſt at whoſe inn I alighted, which prevented his wondering at my making ſo long a ſtay in his houſe. The old man, fortunately, was credulous and incurious: he believed all I ſaid, and ſought to know no more than what I thought proper to tell him. Nobody was with me but Theodore: both were diſguiſed; and as we kept ourſelves cloſe, we were not ſuſpected to be other than what we ſeemed. In this manner the fortnight paſſed away. During that time I had the pleaſing conviction that Agnes was once more at liberty. She paſſed through the village with dame Cunegonda: ſhe ſeemed in good health and ſpirits, and talked to her companion without any appearance of conſtraint.

"Who are thoſe ladies?" ſaid I to my hoſt as the carriage paſſed.

"Baron Lindenberg's niece, with her governeſs," he replied: "ſhe goes regularly every Friday to the convent of St. Catharine, in which ſhe was brought up, and which is ſituated about a mile from hence."

You may be certain that I waited with impatience for the enſuing Friday. I again beheld my lovely miſtreſs. She caſt her eyes upon me as ſhe paſſed the inn door. A bluſh which overſpread her cheek told me, that in ſpite of my diſguiſe I had been recogniſed. I bowed profoundly. She returned the compliment by a ſlight inclination of the head, as if made to one inferior, and looked another way till the carriage was out of ſight.

The long-expected, long-wiſhed-for night arrived. It was calm, and the moon was at the full. As ſoon as the clock ſtruck eleven I haſtened to my appointment, determined not to be too late. Theodore had provided a ladder; I aſcended the garden wall with-

out difficulty. The page followed me, and drew the ladder after us. I poſted myſelf in the weſt pavilion, and waited impatiently for the approach of Agnes. Every breeze that whiſpered, every leaf that fell, I believed to be her foot-ſtep, and haſtened to meet her. Thus was I obliged to paſs a full hour, every minute of which appeared to me an age. The caſtle bell at length tolled twelve, and ſcarcely could I believe the night to be no farther advanced. Another quarter of an hour elapſed, and I heard the light foot of my miſtreſs approaching the pavilion with precaution. I flew to receive her, and conducted her to a ſeat. I threw myſelf at her feet, and was expreſſing my joy at ſeeing her, when ſhe thus interrupted me:

"We have no time to loſe, Alphonſo: the moments are precious; for, though no more a priſoner, Cunegonda watches my every ſtep. An expreſs is arrived from my father; I muſt depart immediately for Madrid, and 'tis with difficulty that I have obtained

tained a week's delay. The ſuperſtition of my parents, ſupported by the repreſentations of my cruel aunt, leaves me no hope of ſoftening them to compaſſion. In this dilemma, I have reſolved to commit myſelf to your honour. God grant that you may never give me cauſe to repent my reſolution! Flight is my only reſource from the horrors of a convent; and my imprudence muſt be excuſed by the urgency of the danger. Now liſten to the plan by which I hope to effect my eſcape.

"We are now at the thirtieth of April. On the fifth day from this the viſionary nun is expected to appear. In my laſt viſit to the convent I provided myſelf with a dreſs proper for the character. A friend whom I have left there, and to whom I made no ſcruple to confide my ſecret, readily conſented to ſupply me with a religious habit. Provide a carriage, and be with it at a little diſtance from the great gate of the caſtle. As ſoon as the clock ſtrikes "one," I ſhall quit my chamber, dreſſed in

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the ſame apparel as the ghoſt is ſuppoſed to wear. Whoever meets me will be too much terrified to oppoſe my eſcape: I ſhall eaſily reach the door, and throw myſelf under your protection. Thus far ſucceſs is certain: but, oh! Alphonſo, ſhould you deceive me; ſhould you deſpiſe my imprudence, and reward it with ingratitude, the world will not hold a being more wretched than myſelf! I feel all the dangers to which I ſhall be expoſed. I feel that I am giving you a right to treat me with levity: but I rely upon your love, upon your honour! The ſtep which I am on the point of taking will incenſe my relations againſt me. Should you deſert me; ſhould you betray the truſt repoſed in you, I ſhall have no friend to puniſh your inſult, or ſupport my cauſe. On yourſelf alone reſts all my hope; and if your own heart does not plead in my behalf, I am undone for ever!"

The tone in which ſhe pronounced theſe words was ſo touching that, in ſpite of my joy at receiving her promiſe to follow me, I could

could not help being affected. I alſo repined in ſecret at not having taken the precaution to provide a carriage at the village; in which caſe, I might have carried off Agnes that very night. Such an attempt was now impracticable; neither carriage nor horſes were to be procured nearer than Munich, which was diſtant from Lindenberg two good days journey. I was therefore obliged to chime in with her plan, which, in truth, ſeemed well arranged. Her diſguiſe would ſecure her from being ſtopped in quitting the caſtle, and would enable her to ſtep into the carriage at the very gate, without difficulty or loſing time.

Agnes reclined her head mournfully upon my ſhoulder, and, by the light of the moon, I ſaw tears flowing down her cheek. I ſtrove to diſſipate her melancholy, and encouraged her to look forward to the proſpect of happineſs. I proteſted in the moſt ſolemn terms that her virtue and innocence would be ſafe in my keeping; and that, till the church had made her my lawful wife,

her

her honour ſhould be held by me as ſacred as a ſiſter's. I told her, that my firſt care ſhould be to find you out, Lorenzo, and reconcile you to our union; and I was continuing to ſpeak in the ſame ſtrain, when a noiſe without alarmed me. Suddenly the door of the pavilion was thrown open, and Cunegonda ſtood before us. She had heard Agnes ſteal out of her chamber, followed her into the garden, and perceived her entering the pavilion. Favoured by the trees which ſhaded it, and unperceived by Theodore, who waited at a little diſtance, ſhe had approached in ſilence, and overheard our whole converſation.

"Admirable!" cried Cunegonda, in a voice ſhrill with paſſion, while Agnes uttered a loud ſhriek. "By St. Barbara, young lady, you have an excellent invention! You muſt perſonate the bleeding nun, truly? What impiety! What incredulity! Marry, I have a good mind to let you purſue your plan. When the real ghoſt met you, I warrant you would be in a

pretty

pretty condition! Don Alphonſo, you ought to be aſhamed of yourſelf for ſeducing a young, ignorant creature to leave her family and friends. However, for this time, at leaſt, I ſhall mar your wicked deſigns. The noble lady ſhall be informed of the whole affair, and Agnes muſt defer playing the ſpectre till a better opportunity. Farewell, Segnor.—Donna Agnes, let me have the honour of conducting your ghoſtſhip back to your apartment."

She approached the ſopha on which her trembling pupil was ſeated, took her by the hand, and prepared to lead her from the pavilion.

I detained her, and ſtrove by entreaties, ſoothing, promiſes, and flattery, to win her to my party; but, finding all that I could ſay of no avail, I abandoned the vain attempt.

"Your obſtinacy muſt be its own puniſhment," ſaid I; "but one reſource remains to ſave Agnes and myſelf, and I ſhall not heſitate to employ it."

Terrified.

Terrified at this menace, ſhe again endeavoured to quit the pavilion; but I ſeized her by the wriſt, and detained her forcibly. At the ſame moment Theodore, who had followed her into the room, cloſed the door, and prevented her eſcape. I took the veil of Agnes; I threw it round the duenna's head, who uttered ſuch piercing ſhrieks that, in ſpite of our diſtance from the caſtle, I dreaded their being heard. At length I ſucceeded in gagging her ſo completely, that ſhe could not produce a ſingle ſound. Theodore and myſelf, with ſome difficulty, next contrived to bind her hands and feet with our handkerchiefs; and I adviſed Agnes to regain her chamber with all diligence. I promiſed that no harm ſhould happen to Cunegonda; bade her remember that, on the fifth of May, I ſhould be in waiting at the great gate of the caſtle, and took of her an affectionate farewell. Trembling and uneaſy, ſhe had ſcarce power enough to ſignify her conſent to my plans,

and

and fled back to her apartment in diſorder and confuſion.

In the mean while Theodore aſſiſted me in carrying off my antiquated prize. She was hoiſted over the wall, placed before me upon my horſe, like a portmanteau, and I galloped away with her from the caſtle of Lindenberg. The unlucky duenna never had made a more diſagreeable journey in her life. She was jolted and ſhaken till ſhe was become little more than an animated mummy; not to mention her fright, when we waded through a ſmall river, through which it was neceſſary to paſs in order to regain the village. Before we reached the inn, I had already determined how to diſpoſe of the troubleſome Cunegonda. We entered the ſtreet in which the inn ſtood; and while the page knocked, I waited at a little diſtance. The landlord opened the door with a lamp in his hand.

"Give me the light," ſaid Theodore, "my maſter is coming."

He

He ſnatched the lamp haſtily, and purpoſely let it fall upon the ground. The landlord returned to the kitchen to re-light the lamp, leaving the door open. I profited by the obſcurity, ſprang from my horſe with Cunegonda in my arms, darted up ſtairs, reached my chamber unperceived, and, unlocking the door of a ſpacious cloſet, ſtowed her within it, and then turned the key. The landlord and Theodore ſoon after appeared with lights: the former expreſſed himſelf ſurpriſed at my returning ſo late, but aſked no impertinent queſtions. He ſoon quitted the room, and left me to exult in the ſucceſs of my undertaking.

I immediately paid a viſit to my priſoner. I ſtrove to perſuade her ſubmitting with patience to her temporary confinement. My attempt was unſucceſsful. Unable to ſpeak or move, ſhe expreſſed her fury by her looks; and, except at meals, I never dared to unbind her, or releaſe her from the gag. At ſuch times I ſtood over her with a drawn ſword, and proteſted that, if ſhe uttered a

ſingle

ſingle cry, I would plunge it in her boſom. As ſoon as ſhe had done eating, the gag was replaced. I was conſcious that this proceeding was cruel, and could only be juſtified by the urgency of circumſtances. As to Theodore, he had no ſcruples upon the ſubject. Cunegonda's captivity entertained him beyond meaſure. During his abode in the caſtle, a continual warfare had been carried on between him and the duenna; and, now that he found his enemy ſo abſolutely in his power, he triumphed without mercy: he ſeemed to think of nothing but how to find out new means of plaguing her. Sometimes he affected to pity her misfortune, then laughed at, abuſed, and mimicked her: he played her a thouſand tricks, each more provoking than the other; and amuſed himſelf by telling her, that her elopement muſt have occaſioned much ſurpriſe at the baron's. This was in fact the caſe. No one, except Agnes, could imagine what was become of dame Cunegonda Every hole and corner was ſearched for her.

the ponds were dragged, and the woods underwent a thorough examination. Still no dame Cunegonda made her appearance. Agnes kept the ſecret, and I kept the duenna: the baroneſs, therefore, remained in total ignorance reſpecting the old woman's fate, but ſuſpected her to have periſhed by ſuicide. Thus paſſed away five days, during which I had prepared every thing neceſſary for my enterpriſe. On quitting Agnes, I had made it my firſt buſineſs to diſpatch a peaſant with a letter to Lucas, at Munich, ordering him to take care that a coach and four ſhould arrive about ten o'clock on the fifth of May at the village of Roſenwald. He obeyed my inſtructions punctually; the equipage arrived at the time appointed. As the period of her lady's elopement drew nearer, Cunegonda's rage increaſed. I verily believe, that ſpite and paſſion would have killed her, had I not luckily diſcovered her prepoſſeſſion in favour of cherry-brandy. With this favourite liquor ſhe was plentifully ſupplied, and, Theodore always remaining

maining to guard her, the gag was occaſionally removed. The liquor ſeemed to have a wonderful effect in ſoftening the acrimony of her nature; and her confinement not admitting of any other amuſement, ſhe got drunk regularly once a-day, juſt by way of paſſing the time.

The fifth of May arrived, a period by me never to be forgotten! Before the clock ſtruck twelve, I betook myſelf to the ſcene of action. Theodore followed me on horſeback. I concealed the carriage in a ſpacious cavern of the hill on whoſe brow the caſtle was ſituated. This cavern was of conſiderable depth, and, among the peaſants, was known by the name of Lindenberg Hole. The night was calm and beautiful: the moon-beams fell upon the antient towers of the caſtle, and ſhed upon their ſummits a ſilver light. All was ſtill around me: nothing was to be heard except the night-breeze ſighing among the leaves, the diſtant barking of village dogs, or the owl who had eſtabliſhed herſelf in a nook of the deſerted eaſtern turret. I

heard

heard her melancholy ſhriek, and looked upwards: ſhe ſat upon the ridge of a window, which I recognized to be that of the haunted room. This brought to my remembrance the ſtory of the bleeding nun, and I ſighed while I reflected on the influence of ſuperſtition, and weakneſs of human reaſon. Suddenly I heard a faint chorus ſteal upon the ſilence of the night.

"What can occaſion that noiſe, Theodore?"

"A ſtranger of diſtinction," replied he, "paſſed through the village to-day in his way to the caſtle: he is reported to be the father of Donna Agnes. Doubtleſs the baron has given an entertainment to celebrate his arrival."

The caſtle bell announced the hour of midnight. This was the uſual ſignal for the family to retire to bed. Soon after I perceived lights in the caſtle, moving backwards and forwards in different directions. I conjectured the company to be ſeparating. I could hear the heavy doors grate as they

opened with difficulty; and as they closed again, the rotten casements rattled in their frames. The chamber of Agnes was on the other side of the castle. I trembled lest she should have failed in obtaining the key of the haunted room. Through this it was necessary for her to pass, in order to reach the narrow stair-case by which the ghost was supposed to descend into the great hall. Agitated by this apprehension, I kept my eyes constantly fixed upon the window, where I hoped to perceive the friendly glare of a lamp borne by Agnes. I now heard the massy gates unbarred. By the candle in his hand, I distinguished old Conrad, the porter. He set the portal doors wide open, and retired. The lights in the castle gradually disappeared, and at length the whole building was wrapt in darkness.

While I sat upon a broken ridge of the hill, the stillness of the scene inspired me with melancholy ideas not altogether unpleasing. The castle, which stood full in my sight, formed an object equally awful

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and pictureſque. Its ponderous walls, tinged by the moon with ſolemn brightneſs; its old and partly ruined towers, lifting themſelves into the clouds, and ſeeming to frown on the plains around them; its lofty battlements, overgrown with ivy, and folding gates, expanding in honour of the viſionary inhabitant, made me ſenſible of a ſad and reverential horror. Yet did not theſe ſenſations occupy me ſo fully as to prevent me from witneſſing with impatience the ſlow progreſs of time. I approached the caſtle, and ventured to walk round it. A few rays of light ſtill glimmered in the chamber of Agnes. I obſerved them with joy. I was ſtill gazing upon them, when I perceived a figure draw near the window, and the curtain was carefully cloſed to conceal the lamp which burned there. Convinced by this obſervation that Agnes had not abandoned our plan, I returned with a light heart to my former ſtation.

The half-hour ſtruck! The three-quarters ſtruck! My boſom beat high with

hope and expectation. At length, the wiſhed-for ſound was heard. The bell tolled "one," and the manſion echoed with the noiſe loud and ſolemn. I looked up to the caſement of the haunted chamber. Scarcely had five minutes elapſed when the expected light appeared. I was now cloſe to the tower. The window was not ſo far from the ground, but that I fancied I perceived a female figure with a lamp in her hand moving ſlowly along the apartment. The light ſoon faded away, and all was again dark and glóomy.

Occaſional gleams of brightneſs darted from the ſtair-caſe windows as the lovely ghoſt paſſed by them. I traced the light through the hall: it reached the portal, and at length I beheld Agnes paſs through the folding gates. She was habited exactly as ſhe had deſcribed the ſpectre. A chaplet of beads hung upon her arm; her head was enveloped in a long white veil; her nun's dreſs was ſtained with blood; and ſhe had taken care to provide herſelf with a lamp

and

and dagger. She advanced towards the ſpot where I ſtood. I flew to meet her, and claſped her in my arms.

"Agnes!" ſaid I, while I preſſed her to my boſom,

"Agnes! Agnes! thou art mine!
"Agnes! Agnes! I am thine!
"In my veins while blood ſhall roll,
"Thou art mine!
"I am thine!
"Thine my body! thine my ſoul!"

Terrified and breathleſs, ſhe was unable to ſpeak. She dropped her lamp and dagger, and ſunk upon my boſom in ſilence. I raiſed her in my arms, and conveyed her to the carriage. Theodore remained behind in order to releaſe dame Cunegonda. I alſo charged him with a letter to the baroneſs, explaining the whole affair, and entreating her good offices in reconciling Don Gaſton to my union with his daughter. I diſcovered to her my real name. I proved to her that my birth and expectations juſtified my pretending to her niece; and aſſured her,

though it was out of my power to return her love, that I would ſtrive unceaſingly to obtain her eſteem and friendſhip.

I ſtepped into the carriage, where Agnes was already ſeated. Theodore cloſed the door, and the poſtillions drove away. At firſt I was delighted with the rapidity of our progreſs; but as ſoon as we were in no danger of purſuit, I called to the drivers, and bade them moderate their pace. They ſtrove in vain to obey me; the horſes refuſed to anſwer the rein, and continued to ruſh on with aſtoniſhing ſwiftneſs. The poſtillions redoubled their efforts to ſtop them; but, by kicking and plunging, the beaſts ſoon releaſed themſelves from this reſtraint. Uttering a loud ſhriek, the drivers were hurled upon the ground. Immediately thick clouds obſcured the ſky: the winds howled around us, the lightning flaſhed, and the thunder roared tremendouſly. Never did I behold ſo frightful a tempeſt! Terrified by the jar of contending elements, the horſes ſeemed every moment

to increaſe their ſpeed. Nothing could interrupt their career; they dragged the carriage through hedges and ditches, daſhed down the moſt dangerous precipices, and ſeemed to vie in ſwiftneſs with the rapidity of the winds.

All this while my companion lay motionleſs in my arms. Truly alarmed by the magnitude of the danger, I was in vain attempting to recall her to her ſenſes, when a loud craſh announced that a ſtop was put to our progreſs in the moſt diſagreeable manner. The carriage was ſhattered to pieces. In falling, I ſtruck my temple againſt a flint. The pain of the wound, the violence of the ſhock, and apprehenſion for the ſafety of Agnes, combined to overpower me ſo completely, that my ſenſes forſook me, and I lay without animation on the ground.

I probably remained for ſome time in this ſituation, ſince, when I opened my eyes, it was broad day-light. Several peaſants were ſtanding round me, and ſeemed diſputing whether my recovery was poſſible. I

ſpoke German tolerably well. As ſoon as I could utter an articulate ſound, I enquired after Agnes. What was my ſurpriſe and diſtreſs, when aſſured by the peaſants that nobody had been ſeen anſwering the deſcription which I gave of her! They told me, that in going to their daily labour they had been alarmed by obſerving the fragments of my carriage, and by hearing the groans of an horſe, the only one of the four which remained alive: the other three lay dead by my ſide. Nobody was near me when they came up, and much time had been loſt before they ſucceeded in recovering me. Uneaſy beyond expreſſion reſpecting the fate of my companion, I beſought the peaſants to diſperſe themſelves in ſearch of her. I deſcribed her dreſs, and promiſed immenſe rewards to whoever brought me any intelligence. As for myſelf, it was impoſſible for me to join in the purſuit: I had broken two of my ribs in the fall; my arm being diſlocated hung uſeleſs by my ſide; and my left leg was ſhattered

tered ſo terribly, that I never expected to recover its uſe.

The peaſants complied with my requeſt; all left me except four, who made a litter of boughs, and prepared to convey me to the neighbouring town. I enquired its name; it proved to be Ratiſbon, and I could ſcarcely perſuade myſelf that I had travelled to ſuch a diſtance in a ſingle night. I told the countrymen, that at one o'clock that morning I had paſſed through the village of Roſenwald. They ſhook their heads wiſtfully, and made ſigns to each other that I muſt certainly be delirious. I was conveyed to a decent inn, and immediately put to bed. A phyſician was ſent for, who ſet my arm with ſucceſs: he then examined my other hurts, and told me that I need be under no apprehenſion of the conſequences of any of them, but ordered me to keep myſelf quiet, and be prepared for a tedious and painful cure. I anſwered him, that if he hoped to keep me quiet, he muſt firſt endeavour to procure me ſome news of a

lady who had quitted Roſenwald in my company the night before, and had been with me at the moment when the coach broke down. He ſmiled, and only replied by adviſing me to make myſelf eaſy, for that all proper care ſhould be taken of me. As he quitted me, the hoſteſs met him at the door of the room.

"The gentleman is not quite in his right ſenſes," I heard him ſay to her in a low voice; "'tis the natural conſequence of his fall, but that will ſoon be over."

One after another the peaſants returned to the inn, and informed me that no traces had been diſcovered of my unfortunate miſtreſs. Uneaſineſs now became deſpair. I entreated them to renew their ſearch in the moſt urgent terms, doubling the promiſes which I had already made them. My wild and frantic manner confirmed the by-ſtanders in the idea of my being delirious. No ſigns of the lady having appeared, they believed her to be a creature fabricated by my over-heated brain, and

paid no attention to my entreaties. However, the hoſteſs aſſured me, that a freſh enquiry ſhould be made; but I found afterwards that her promiſe was only given to quiet me. No further ſteps were taken in the buſineſs.

Though my baggage was left at Munich under the care of my French ſervant, having prepared myſelf for a long journey, my purſe was amply furniſhed: beſides, my equipage proved me to be of diſtinction, and in conſequence all poſſible attention was paid me at the inn. The day paſſed away: ſtill no news arrived of Agnes. The anxiety of fear now gave place to deſpondency. I ceaſed to rave about her, and was plunged in the depth of melancholy reflections. Perceiving me to be ſilent and tranquil, my attendants believed my delirium to have abated, and that my malady had taken a favourable turn. According to the phyſician's order, I ſwallowed a compoſing medicine; and as ſoon as the night

ſhut in, my attendants withdrew, and left me to repoſe.

That repoſe I wooed in vain. The agitation of my boſom chaſed away ſleep. Reſtleſs in my mind, in ſpite of the fatigue of my body, I continued to toſs about from ſide to ſide, till the clock in a neighbouring ſteeple ſtruck "one." As I liſtened to the mournful hollow ſound, and heard it die away in the wind, I felt a ſudden chillneſs ſpread itſelf over my body. I ſhuddered without knowing wherefore; cold dews poured down my forehead, and my hair ſtood briſtling with alarm. Suddenly I heard ſlow and heavy ſteps aſcending the ſtair-caſe. By an involuntary movement I ſtarted up in my bed, and drew back the curtain. A ſingle ruſh-light, which glimmered upon the hearth, ſhed a faint gleam through the apartment, which was hung with tapeſtry. The door was thrown open with violence. A figure entered, and drew near my bed with ſolemn meaſured ſteps.

With

With trembling apprehenſion I examined this midnight viſitor. God Almighty! it was the bleeding nun! It was my loſt companion! Her face was ſtill veiled, but ſhe no longer held her lamp and dagger. She lifted up her veil ſlowly. What a ſight preſented itſelf to my ſtartled eyes! I beheld before me an animated corſe. Her countenance was long and haggard; her cheeks and lips were bloodleſs; the paleneſs of death was ſpread over her features; and her eye-balls, fixed ſtedfaſtly upon me, were luſtreleſs and hollow.

I gazed upon the ſpectre with horror too great to be deſcribed. My blood was frozen in my veins. I would have called for aid, but the ſound expired ere it could paſs my lips. My nerves were bound up in impotence, and I remained in the ſame attitude inanimate as a ſtatue.

The viſionary nun looked upon me for ſome minutes in ſilence: there was ſomething petrifying in her regard. At length,

in

in a low ſepulchral voice, ſhe pronounced the following words:

" Raymond! Raymond! Thou art mine!
" Raymond! Raymond! I am thine!
" In thy veins while blood ſhall roll,
" I am thine!
" Thou art mine!
" Mine thy body! Mine thy ſoul!"——

Breathleſs with fear, I liſtened while ſhe repeated my own expreſſions. The apparition ſeated herſelf oppoſite to me at the foot of the bed, and was ſilent. Her eyes were fixed earneſtly upon mine: they ſeemed endowed with the property of the rattleſnake's, for I ſtrove in vain to look off her. My eyes were faſcinated, and I had not the power of withdrawing them from the ſpectre's.

In this attitude ſhe remained for a whole long hour without ſpeaking or moving; nor was I able to do either. At length the clock ſtruck two. The apparition roſe from her ſeat, and approached the ſide of the bed. She graſped with her icy fingers my

my hand, which hung lifeleſs upon the coverture, and, preſſing her cold lips to mine, again repeated,

" Raymond! Raymond! Thou art mine!
" Raymond! Raymond! I am thine!" &c.—

She then dropped my hand, quitted the chamber with ſlow ſteps, and the door cloſed after her. Till that moment the faculties of my body had been all ſuſpended; thoſe of my mind had alone been waking. The charm now ceaſed to operate; the blood which had been frozen in my veins ruſhed back to my heart with violence; I uttered a deep groan, and ſunk lifeleſs upon my pillow.

The adjoining room was only ſeparated from mine by a thin partition; it was occupied by the hoſt and his wife: the former was rouſed by my groan, and immediately haſtened to my chamber; the hoſteſs ſoon followed him. With ſome difficulty they ſucceeded in reſtoring me to my ſenſes, and immediately ſent for the phyſician, who arrived in all diligence. He declared

my

my fever to be very much increaſed, and that, if I continued to ſuffer ſuch violent agitation, he would not take upon him to enſure my life. Some medicines which he gave me, in ſome degree tranquillized my ſpirits. I fell into a ſort of ſlumber towards day-break, but fearful dreams prevented me from deriving any benefit from my repoſe. Agnes and the bleeding nun preſented themſelves by turns to my fancy, and combined to haraſs and torment me. I awoke fatigued and unrefreſhed. My fever ſeemed rather augmented than diminiſhed; the agitation of my mind impeded my fractured bones from knitting: I had frequent fainting fits, and during the whole day the phyſician judged it expedient not to quit me for two hours together.

The ſingularity of my adventure made me determine to conceal it from every one, ſince I could not expect that a circumſtance ſo ſtrange ſhould gain credit. I was very uneaſy about Agnes. I knew not what ſhe would think at not finding me at the rendezvous,

dezvous, and dreaded her entertaining ſuſpicions of my fidelity. However, I depended upon Theodore's diſcretion, and truſted that my letter to the baroneſs would convince her of the rectitude of my intentions. Theſe conſiderations ſomewhat lightened my inquietude upon her account; but the impreſſion left upon my mind by my nocturnal viſitor grew ſtronger with every ſucceeding moment. The night drew near; I dreaded its arrival; yet I ſtrove to perſuade myſelf that the ghoſt would appear no more, and at all events I deſired that a ſervant might ſit up in my chamber.

The fatigue of my body, from not having ſlept on the former night, co-operating with the ſtrong opiates adminiſtered to me in profuſion, at length procured me that repoſe of which I was ſo much in need. I ſunk into a profound and tranquil ſlumber, and had already ſlept for ſome hours, when the neighbouring clock rouſed me by ſtriking "one." Its ſound brought with it to my memory all the horrors of the night before.

before. The ſame cold ſhivering ſeized me. I ſtarted up in my bed, and perceived the ſervant faſt aſleep in an arm-chair near me. I called him by his name: he made no anſwer. I ſhook him forcibly by the arm, and ſtrove in vain to wake him: he was perfectly inſenſible to my efforts. I now heard the heavy ſteps aſcending the ſtair-caſe; the door was thrown open, and again the bleeding nun ſtood before me. Once more my limbs were chained in ſecond infancy: once more I heard thoſe fatal words repeated,

"Raymond! Raymond! Thou art mine!
"Raymond! Raymond! I am thine!" &c.—

The ſcene which had ſhocked me ſo ſenſibly on the former night, was again preſented. The ſpectre again preſſed her lips to mine, again touched me with her rotting fingers, and, as on her firſt appearance, quitted the chamber as ſoon as the clock told "two."

Every night was this repeated. Far from growing accuſtomed to the ghoſt, every

every ſucceeding viſit inſpired me with greater horror. Her idea purſued me continually, and I became the prey of habitual melancholy. The conſtant agitation of my mind naturally retarded the re-eſtabliſhment of my health. Several months elapſed before I was able to quit my bed; and when, at length, I was moved to a ſopha, I was ſo faint, ſpiritleſs, and emaciated, that I could not croſs the room without aſſiſtance. The looks of my attendants ſufficiently denoted the little hope which they entertained of my recovery. The profound ſadneſs which oppreſſed me without remiſſion, made the phyſician conſider me to be an hypochondriac. The cauſe of my diſtreſs I carefully concealed in my own boſom, for I knew that no one could give me relief. The ghoſt was not even viſible to any eye but mine. I had frequently cauſed attendants to ſit up in my room; but the moment that the clock ſtruck "one," irreſiſtible ſlumber ſeized them, nor left them till the departure of the ghoſt.

You

You may be ſurpriſed that during this time I made no enquiries after your ſiſter. Theodore, who with difficulty had diſcovered my abode, had quieted my apprehenſions for her ſafety; at the ſame time he convinced me, that all attempts to releaſe her from captivity muſt be fruitleſs, till I ſhould be in a condition to return to Spain. The particulars of her adventure, which I ſhall now relate to you, were partly communicated to me by Theodore, and partly by Agnes herſelf.

On the fatal night when her elopement was to have taken place, accident had not permitted her to quit her chamber at the appointed time. At length ſhe ventured into the haunted room, deſcended the ſtaircaſe leading into the hall, found the gates open as ſhe expected, and left the caſtle unobſerved. What was her ſurpriſe at not finding me ready to receive her! She examined the cavern, ranged through every alley of the neighbouring wood, and paſſed two full hours in this fruitleſs enquiry. She

could

could discover no traces either of me or of the carriage. Alarmed and disappointed, her only resource was to return to the castle before the baroness missed her; but here she found herself in a fresh embarrassment. The bell had already tolled "two," the ghostly hour was past, and the careful porter had locked the folding gates. After much irresolution, she ventured to knock softly. Luckily for her, Conrad was still awake: he heard the noise, and rose, murmuring at being called up a second time. No sooner had he opened one of the doors, and beheld the supposed apparition waiting there for admittance, than he uttered a loud cry, and sunk upon his knees. Agnes profited by his terror: she glided by him, flew to her own apartment, and, having thrown off her spectre's trappings, retired to bed, endeavouring in vain to account for my disappearing.

In the mean while, Theodore, having seen my carriage drive off with the false Agnes, returned joyfully to the village.

The

The next morning he releaſed Cunegonda from her confinement, and accompanied her to the caſtle. There he found the baron, his lady, and Don Gaſton, diſputing together upon the porter's relation. All of them agreed in believing the exiſtence of ſpectres; but the latter contended, that for a ghoſt to knock for admittance was a proceeding till then unwitneſſed, and totally incompatible with the immaterial nature of a ſpirit. They were ſtill diſcuſſing the ſubject, when the page appeared with Cunegonda, and cleared up the myſtery. On hearing his depoſition, it was agreed unanimouſly, that the Agnes whom Theodore had ſeen ſtep into my carriage muſt have been the bleeding nun, and that the ghoſt who had terrified Conrad was no other than Don Gaſton's daughter.

The firſt ſurpriſe which this diſcovery occaſioned being over, the baroneſs reſolved to make it of uſe in perſuading her niece to take the veil. Fearing leſt ſo advantageous an eſtabliſhment for his daugh-

ter

ter ſhould induce Don Gaſton to renounce his reſolution, ſhe ſuppreſſed my letter, and continued to repreſent me as a needy unknown adventurer. A childiſh vanity had led me to conceal my real name even from my miſtreſs; I wiſhed to be loved for myſelf, not for being the ſon and heir of the marquis de las Ciſternas. The conſequence was, that my rank was known to no one in the caſtle except the baroneſs, and ſhe took good care to confine the knowledge to her own breaſt. Don Gaſton having approved his ſiſter's deſign, Agnes was ſummoned to appear before them. She was taxed with having meditated an elopement, obliged to make a full confeſſion, and was amazed at the gentleneſs with which it was received: but what was her affliction, when informed that the failure of her project muſt be attributed to me! Cunegonda, tutored by the baroneſs, told her, that when I releaſed her I had deſired her to inform her lady that our connexion was at an end, that the whole affair was occaſioned

caſioned by a falſe report, and that it by no means ſuited my circumſtances to marry a woman without fortune or expectations.

To this account my ſudden diſappearing gave but too great an air of probability. Theodore, who could have contradicted the ſtory, by Donna Rodolpha's order was kept out of her ſight. What proved a ſtill greater confirmation of my being an impoſtor, was the arrival of a letter from yourſelf, declaring that you had no ſort of acquaintance with Alphonſo d'Alvarada. Theſe ſeeming proofs of my perfidy, aided by the artful inſinuations of her aunt, by Cunegonda's flattery, and her father's threats and anger, entirely conquered your ſiſter's repugnance to a convent. Incenſed at my behaviour, and diſguſted with the world in general, ſhe conſented to receive the veil. She paſſed another month at the caſtle of Lindenberg, during which my non-appearance confirmed her in her reſolution, and then accompanied Don Gaſton into Spain. Theodore was now ſet at liberty. He

haſtened

haſtened to Munich, where I had promiſed to let him hear from me; but finding from Lucas that I never arrived there, he purſued his ſearch with indefatigable perſeverance, and at length ſucceeded in rejoining me at Ratiſbon.

So much was I altered, that ſcarcely could he recollect my features: the diſtreſs viſible upon his, ſufficiently teſtified how lively was the intereſt which he felt for me. The ſociety of this amiable boy, whom I had always conſidered rather as a companion than a ſervant, was now my only comfort. His converſation was gay, yet ſenſible, and his obſervations ſhrewd and entertaining. He had picked up much more knowledge than is uſual at his age; but what rendered him moſt agreeable to me, was his having a delightful voice, and no mean ſkill in muſic. He had alſo acquired ſome taſte in poetry, and even ventured occaſionally to write verſes himſelf. He frequently compoſed little ballads in Spaniſh. His compoſitions were but indifferent, I muſt confeſs, yet they were pleaſing to me

from their novelty; and hearing him ſing them to his guitar was the only amuſement which I was capable of receiving. Theodore perceived well enough that ſomething preyed upon my mind; but as I concealed the cauſe of my grief even from him, reſpect would not permit him to pry into my ſecrets.

One evening I was lying upon my ſopha, plunged in reflections very far from agreeable: Theodore amuſed himſelf by obſerving from the window a battle between two poſtillions, who were quarrelling in the inn-yard.

"Ha! ha!" cried he ſuddenly, "yonder is the Great Mogul."

"Who?" ſaid I.

"Only a man who made me a ſtrange ſpeech at Munich."

"What was the purport of it?"

"Now you put me in mind of it, Segnor, it was a kind of meſſage to you, but truly it was not worth delivering. I believe the fellow to be mad, for my part. When I came to Munich in ſearch of you,

I found

I found him living at 'the King of the Romans,' and the hoſt gave me an odd account of him. By his accent he is ſuppoſed to be a foreigner, but of what country nobody can tell. He ſeemed to have no acquaintance in the town, ſpoke very ſeldom, and never was ſeen to ſmile. He had neither ſervants nor baggage; but his purſe ſeemed well furniſhed, and he did much good in the town. Some ſuppoſed him to be an Arabian aſtrologer, others to be a travelling mountebank, and many declared that he was Doctor Fauſtus, whom the devil had ſent back to Germany. The landlord, however, told me, that he had the beſt reaſons to believe him to be the Great Mogul incognito."

"But the ſtrange ſpeech, Theodore—"

"True, I had almoſt forgotten the ſpeech: indeed, for that matter, it would not have been a great loſs if I had forgotten it altogether. You are to know, Segnor, that while I was enquiring about you of the landlord, this ſtranger paſſed by. He ſtop-

ped, and looked at me earneſtly—"Youth," ſaid he, in a ſolemn voice, "he whom you ſeek, has found that which he would fain loſe. My hand alone can dry up the blood. Bid your maſter wiſh for me when the clock ſtrikes "one."

"How?" cried I, ſtarting from my ſopha. [The words which Theodore had repeated, ſeemed to imply the ſtranger's knowledge of my ſecret] "Fly to him, my boy! entreat him to grant me one moment's converſation."

Theodore was ſurpriſed at the vivacity of my manner: however, he aſked no queſtions, but haſtened to obey me. I waited his return impatiently. But a ſhort ſpace of time had elapſed, when he again appeared, and uſhered the expected gueſt into my chamber. He was a man of majeſtic preſence; his countenance was ſtrongly marked, and his eyes were large, black, and ſparkling: yet there was a ſomething in his look, which, the moment that I ſaw him, inſpired me with a ſecret awe, not to

ſay horror. He was dreſſed plainly, his hair hung wildly upon his brow, and a band of black velvet, which encircled his forehead, ſpread over his features an additional gloom. His countenance wore the marks of profound melancholy, his ſtep was ſlow, and his manner grave, ſtately, and ſolemn.

He ſaluted me with politeneſs; and having replied to the uſual compliments of introduction, he motioned to Theodore to quit the chamber. The page inſtantly withdrew.

"I know your buſineſs," ſaid he, without giving me time to ſpeak. "I have the power of releaſing you from your nightly viſitor; but this cannot be done before Sunday. On the hour when the ſabbath morning breaks, ſpirits of darkneſs have leaſt influence over mortals. After Saturday the nun ſhall viſit you no more."

"May I not enquire," ſaid I, "by what means you are in poſſeſſion of a ſecret, which I have carefully concealed from the knowledge of every one?"

"How can I be ignorant of your diſtreſſes, when their cauſe at this moment ſtands beſide you?"

I ſtarted. The ſtranger continued.

"Though to you only viſible for one hour in the twenty-four, neither day or night does ſhe ever quit you; nor will ſhe ever quit you till you have granted her requeſt."

"And what is that requeſt?"

"That ſhe muſt herſelf explain: it lies not in my knowledge. Wait with patience for the night of Saturday: all ſhall be then cleared up."

I dared not preſs him further. He ſoon after changed the converſation, and talked of various matters. He named people who had ceaſed to exiſt for many centuries, and yet with whom he appeared to have been perſonally acquainted. I could not mention a country, however diſtant, which he had not viſited, nor could I ſufficiently admire the extent and variety of his information. I remarked to him, that having

travelled, ſeen and known ſo much, muſt have given him infinite pleaſure. He ſhook his head mournfully.

"No one," he replied, "is adequate to comprehending the miſery of my lot! Fate obliges me to be conſtantly in movement; I am not permitted to paſs more than a fortnight in the ſame place. I have no friend in the world, and, from the reſtleſſneſs of my deſtiny, I never can acquire one. Fain would I lay down my miſerable life, for I envy thoſe who enjoy the quiet of the grave: but death eludes me, and flies from my embrace. In vain do I throw myſelf in the way of danger. I plunge into the ocean; the waves throw me back with abhorrence upon the ſhore: I ruſh into fire; the flames recoil at my approach: I oppoſe myſelf to the fury of banditti; their ſwords become blunted, and break againſt my breaſt. The hungry tiger ſhudders at my approach, and the alligator flies from a monſter more horrible than itſelf. God

has ſet his ſeal upon me, and all his creatures reſpect this fatal mark."

He put his hand to the velvet, which was bound round his forehead. There was in his eyes an expreſſion of fury, deſpair, and malevolence, that ſtruck horror to my very ſoul. An involuntary convulſion made me ſhudder. The ſtranger perceived it.

"Such is the curſe impoſed on me," he continued: "I am doomed to inſpire all who look on me with terror and deteſtation. You already feel the influence of the charm, and with every ſucceeding moment will feel it more. I will not add to your ſufferings by my preſence. Farewell till Saturday. As ſoon as the clock ſtrikes twelve, expect me at your chamber-door."

Having ſaid this he departed, leaving me in aſtoniſhment at the myſterious turn of his manner and converſation. His aſſurances that I ſhould ſoon be relieved from the apparition's viſits, produced a good effect upon my conſtitution. Theodore,

whom I rather treated as an adopted child than a domeſtic, was ſurpriſed at his return to obſerve the amendment in my looks. He congratulated me on this ſymptom of returning health, and declared himſelf delighted at my having received ſo much benefit from my conference with the Great Mogul. Upon enquiry I found that the ſtranger had already paſſed eight days in Ratiſbon. According to his own account, therefore, he was only to remain there ſix days longer. Saturday was ſtill at the diſtance of three. Oh! with what impatience did I expect its arrival! In the interim, the bleeding nun continued her nocturnal viſits; but hoping ſoon to be releaſed from them altogether, the effects which they produced on me became leſs violent than before.

The wiſhed-for night arrived. To avoid creating ſuſpicion I retired to bed at my uſual hour. But as ſoon as my attendants had left me, I dreſſed myſelf again, and prepared for the ſtranger's reception. He

entered my room upon the turn of midnight. A ſmall cheſt was in his hand, which he placed near the ſtove. He ſaluted me without ſpeaking; I returned the compliment, obſerving an equal ſilence. He then opened his cheſt. The firſt thing which he produced was a ſmall wooden crucifix: he ſunk upon his knees, gazed upon it mournfully, and caſt his eyes towards heaven. He ſeemed to be praying devoutly. At length he bowed his head reſpectfully, kiſſed the crucifix thrice, and quitted his kneeling poſture. He next drew from the cheſt a covered goblet: with the liquor which it contained, and which appeared to be blood, he ſprinkled the floor; and then dipping in it one end of the crucifix, he deſcribed a circle in the midde of the room. Round about this he placed various reliques, ſculls, thigh-bones, &c. I obſerved, that he diſpoſed them all in the forms of croſſes. Laſtly, he took out a large bible, and beckoned me to follow him into the circle. I obeyed.

" Be cautious not to utter a ſyllable !" whiſpered the ſtranger : " ſtep not out of the circle, and, as you love yourſelf, dare not to look upon my face !"

Holding the crucifix in one hand, the bible in the other, he ſeemed to read with profound attention. The clock ſtruck one ! As uſual I heard the ſpectre's ſteps upon the ſtair-caſe : but I was not ſeized with the accuſtomed ſhivering. I waited her approach with confidence. She entered the room, drew near the circle, and ſtopped. The ſtranger muttered ſome words, to me unintelligible. Then raiſing his head from the book, and extending the crucifix towards the ghoſt, he pronounced, in a voice diſtinct and ſolemn,

" Beatrice ! Beatrice ! Beatrice !"

" What wouldſt thou ?" replied the apparition in a hollow faltering tone.

" What diſturbs thy ſleep ? Why doſt thou afflict and torture this youth ? How can reſt be reſtored to thy unquiet ſpirit ?"

" I dare not tell ! I muſt not tell ! Fain

would I repoſe in my grave, but ſtern commands force me to prolong my puniſhment!"

"Knoweſt thou this blood? Knoweſt thou in whoſe veins it flowed? Beatrice! Beatrice! In his name, I charge thee to anſwer me."

"I dare not diſobey my taſkers."

"Dareſt thou diſobey me?"

He ſpoke in a commanding tone, and drew the ſable band from his forehead. In ſpite of his injunctions to the contrary, curioſity would not ſuffer me to keep my eyes off his face: I raiſed them, and beheld a burning croſs impreſſed upon his brow. For the horror with which this object inſpired me I cannot account, but I never felt its equal. My ſenſes left me for ſome moments: a myſterious dread overcame my courage; and had not the exorciſer caught my hand, I ſhould have fallen out of the circle.

When I recovered myſelf, I perceived that the burning croſs had produced an

effect

effect no leſs violent upon the ſpectre. Her countenance expreſſed reverence and horror, and her viſionary limbs were ſhaken by fear.

" Yes !" ſhe ſaid at length, " I tremble at that mark ! I reſpect it ! I obey you ! Know then, that my bones lie ſtill unburied : they rot in the obſcurity of Lindenberg Hole. None but this youth has the right of conſigning them to the grave. His own lips have made over to me his body and his ſoul : never will I give back his promiſe, never ſhall he know a night devoid of terror, unleſs he engages to collect my mouldering bones, and depoſit them in the family vault of his Andaluſian caſtle. Then let thirty maſſes be ſaid for the repoſe of my ſpirit, and I trouble this world no more. Now let me depart. Thoſe flames are ſcorching !"

He let the hand drop ſlowly which held the crucifix, and which till then he had pointed towards her. The apparition bowed her head, and her form melted into air.

air. The exorciſer led me out of the circle. He replaced the bible, &c. in the cheſt, and then addreſſed himſelf to me, who ſtood near him ſpeechleſs from aſtoniſhment.

"Don Raymond, you have heard the conditions on which repoſe is promiſed you. Be it your buſineſs to fulfil them to the letter. For me, nothing more remains than to clear up the darkneſs ſtill ſpread over the ſpectre's hiſtory, and inform you, that when living Beatrice bore the name of las Ciſternas. She was the great aunt of your grandfather. In quality of your relation, her aſhes demand reſpect from you, though the enormity of her crimes muſt excite your abhorrence. The nature of thoſe crimes no one is more capable of explaining to you than myſelf. I was perſonally acquainted with the holy man who proſcribed her nocturnal riots in the caſtle of Lindenberg, and I hold this narrative from his own lips.

"Beatrice de las Ciſternas took the veil

at

at an early age, not by her own choice, but at the expreſs command of her parents. She was then too young to regret the pleaſures of which her profeſſion deprived her: but no ſooner did her warm and voluptuous character begin to be developed, than ſhe abandoned herſelf freely to the impulſe of her paſſions, and ſeized the firſt opportunity to procure their gratification. This opportunity was at length preſented, after many obſtacles which only added new force to her deſires. She contrived to elope from the convent, and fled to Germany with the baron Lindenberg. She lived at his caſtle ſeveral months as his avowed concubine. All Bavaria was ſcandalized by her impudent and abandoned conduct. Her feaſts vied in luxury with Cleopatra's, and Lindenberg became the theatre of the moſt unbridled debauchery. Not ſatisfied with diſplaying the incontinence of a proſtitute, ſhe profeſſed herſelf an atheiſt: ſhe took every opportunity to ſcoff at her monaſtic

naſtic vows, and loaded with ridicule the moſt ſacred ceremonies of religion.

" Poſſeſſed of a character ſo depraved, ſhe did not long confine her affections to one object. Soon after her arrival at the caſtle, the baron's younger brother attracted her notice by his ſtrong-marked features, gigantic ſtature, and herculean limbs. She was not of an humour to keep her inclination long unknown: but ſhe found in Otto von Lindenberg her equal in depravity. He returned her paſſion juſt ſufficiently to increaſe it; and when he had worked it up to the deſired pitch, he fixed the price of his love at his brother's murder. The wretch conſented to this horrible agreement. A night was pitched upon for perpetrating the deed. Otto, who reſided on a ſmall eſtate a few miles diſtant from the caſtle, promiſed that, at one in the morning, he would be waiting for her at Lindenberg-hole; that he would bring with him a party of choſen friends, by whoſe aid he doubted not being

able

able to make himſelf maſter of the caſtle; and that his next ſtep ſhould be the uniting her hand to his. It was this laſt promiſe which over-ruled every ſcruple of Beatrice, ſince, in ſpite of his affection for her, the baron had declared poſitively, that he never would make her his wife.

"The fatal night arrived. The baron ſlept in the arms of his perfidious miſtreſs, when the caſtle bell ſtruck "one." Immediately Beatrice drew a dagger from underneath her pillow, and plunged it in her paramour's heart. The baron uttered a ſingle dreadful groan, and expired. The murdereſs quitted her bed haſtily, took a lamp in one hand, in the other the bloody dagger, and bent her courſe towards the cavern. The porter dared not to refuſe opening the gates to one more dreaded in the caſtle than its maſter. Beatrice reached Lindenberg-hole unoppoſed, where, according to promiſe, ſhe found Otto waiting for her. He received, and liſtened to her narrative with tranſport: but ere ſhe had

time

time to ask why he came unaccompanied, he convinced her that he wished for no witnesses to their interview. Anxious to conceal his share in the murder, and to free himself from a woman whose violent and atrocious character made him tremble with reason for his own safety, he had resolved on the destruction of his wretched agent. Rushing upon her suddenly, he wrested the dagger from her hand. He plunged it, still reeking with his brother's blood, in her bosom, and put an end to her existence by repeated blows.

"Otto now succeeded to the barony of Lindenberg. The murder was attributed solely to the fugitive nun, and no one suspected him to have persuaded her to the action. But though his crime was unpunished by man, God's justice permitted him not to enjoy in peace his blood-stained honours. Her bones lying still unburied in the cave, the restless soul of Beatrice continued to inhabit the castle. Dressed in her religious habit, in memory of her vows broken to

heaven,

heaven, furniſhed with the dagger which had drank the blood of her paramour, and holding the lamp which had guided her flying ſteps, every night did ſhe ſtand before the bed of Otto. The moſt dreadful confuſion reigned through the caſtle. The vaulted chambers reſounded with ſhrieks and groans; and the ſpectre, as ſhe ranged along the antique galleries, uttered an incoherent mixture of prayers and blaſphemies. Otto was unable to withſtand the ſhock which he felt at this fearful viſion: its horrors increaſed with every ſucceeding appearance. His alarm at length became ſo inſupportable, that his heart burſt, and one morning he was found in his bed totally deprived of warmth and animation. His death did not put an end to the nocturnal riots. The bones of Beatrice continued to lie unburied, and her ghoſt continued to haunt the caſtle.

"The domains of Lindenberg now felt to a diſtant relation. But terrified by the accounts given him of the bleeding nun (ſo

was

was the ſpectre called by the multitude) the new baron called to his aſſiſtance a celebrated exorciſer. This holy man ſucceeded in obliging her to temporary repoſe: but though ſhe diſcovered to him her hiſtory, he was not permitted to reveal it to others, or cauſe her ſkeleton to be removed to hallowed ground. That office was reſerved for you; and till your coming her ghoſt was doomed to wander about the caſtle, and lament the crime which ſhe had there committed. However, the exorciſer obliged her to ſilence during his life-time. So long as he exiſted, the haunted chamber was ſhut up, and the ſpectre was inviſible. At his death, which happened in five years after, ſhe again appeared, but only once on every fifth year, on the ſame day and at the ſame hour when ſhe plunged her knife in the heart of her ſleeping lover: ſhe then viſited the cavern which held her mouldering ſkeleton, returned to the caſtle as ſoon as the clock ſtruck two, and was ſeen no more till the next five years had elapſed.

"She

"She was doomed to ſuffer during the ſpace of a century. That period is paſt. Nothing now remains but to conſign to the grave the aſhes of Beatrice. I have been the means of releaſing you from your viſionary tormentor; and amidſt all the ſorrows which oppreſs me, to think that I have been of uſe to you, is ſome conſolation. Youth, farewell! May the ghoſt of your relation enjoy that reſt in the tomb, which the Almighty's vengeance has denied to me for ever!"

Here the ſtranger prepared to quit the apartment.

"Stay yet one moment!" ſaid I; "you have ſatisfied my curioſity with regard to the ſpectre, but you leave me a prey to yet greater reſpecting yourſelf. Deign to inform me to whom I am under ſuch real obligations. You mention circumſtances long paſt, and people long dead: you were perſonally acquainted with the exorciſer, who, by your own account, has been deceaſed near a century. How am I to account

count for this? What means that burning croſs upon your forehead, and why did the ſight of it ſtrike ſuch horror to my ſoul?"

On theſe points he for ſome time refuſed to ſatisfy me. At length, overcome by my entreaties, he conſented to clear up the whole, on condition that I would defer his explanation till the next day. With this requeſt I was obliged to comply, and he left me. In the morning my firſt care was to enquire after the myſterious ſtranger. Conceive my diſappointment, when informed that he had quitted Ratiſbon. I diſpatched meſſengers in purſuit of him, but in vain. No traces of the fugitive were diſcovered. Since that moment I never have heard any more of him, and 'tis moſt probable that I never ſhall."

[Lorenzo here interrupted his friend's narrative:

"How!" ſaid he, "you have never diſcovered who he was, or even formed a gueſs?"

"Pardon me," replied the marquis: "when

" when I related this adventure to my uncle, the cardinal-duke, he told me, that he had no doubt of this ſingular man's being the celebrated character known univerſally by the name of *the wandering Jew*. His not being permitted to paſs more than fourteen days on the ſame ſpot, the burning croſs impreſſed upon his forehead, the effect which it produced upon the beholders, and many other circumſtances, gave this ſuppoſition the colour of truth. The cardinal is fully perſuaded of it; and for my own part I am inclined to adopt the only ſolution which offers itſelf to this riddle." I return to the narrative from which I have digreſſed.]

From this period I recovered my health ſo rapidly as to aſtoniſh my phyſicians. The bleeding nun appeared no more, and I was ſoon able to ſet out for Lindenberg. The baron received me with open arms. I confided to him the ſequel of my adventure; and he was not a little pleaſed to find that his manſion would be no longer troubled with

with the phantom's quinquennial visits. I was sorry to perceive, that absence had not weakened Donna Rodolpha's imprudent passion. In a private conversation which I had with her during my short stay at the castle, she renewed her attempts to persuade me to return her affection. Regarding her as the primary cause of all my sufferings, I entertained for her no other sentiment than disgust. The skeleton of Beatrice was found in the place which she had mentioned. This being all that I sought at Lindenberg, I hastened to quit the baron's domains, equally anxious to perform the obsequies of the murdered nun, and escape the importunity of a woman whom I detested. I departed, followed by Donna Rodolpha's menaces, that my contempt should not be long unpunished.

I now bent my course towards Spain with all diligence. Lucas with my baggage had joined me during my abode at Lindenberg. I arrived in my native country without any accident, and immediately

proceeded

proceeded to my father's caſtle in Andaluſia. The remains of Beatrice were depoſited in the family vault, all due ceremonies performed, and the number of maſſes ſaid which ſhe had required. Nothing now hindered me from employing all my endeavours to diſcover the retreat of Agnes. The baroneſs had aſſured me, that her niece had already taken the veil: this intelligence I ſuſpected to have been forged by jealouſy, and hope to find my miſtreſs ſtill at liberty to accept my hand. I enquired after her family; I found that before her daughter could reach Madrid, Donna Ineſilla was no more: you, my dear Lorenzo, were ſaid to be abroad, but where I could not diſcover: your father was in a diſtant province, on a viſit to the duke de Medina; and as to Agnes, no one could or would inform me what was become of her. Theodore, according to promiſe, had returned to Straſbourg, where he found his grandfather dead, and Marguerite in poſſeſſion of his fortune. All her perſua-

ſions to remain with her were fruitleſs: he quitted her a ſecond time, and followed me to Madrid. He exerted himſelf to the utmoſt in forwarding my ſearch: but our united endeavours were unattended by ſucceſs. The retreat which concealed Agnes remained an impenetrable myſtery, and I began to abandon all hopes of recovering her.

About eight months ago I was returning to my hotel in a melancholy humour, having paſſed the evening at the play-houſe. The night was dark, and I was unaccompanied. Plunged in reflections which were far from being agreeable, I perceived not that three men had followed me from the theatre, till, on turning into an unfrequented ſtreet, they all attacked me at the ſame time with the utmoſt fury. I ſprang back a few paces, drew my ſword, and threw my cloak over my left arm. The obſcurity of the night was in my favour. For the moſt part the blows of the aſſaſſins, being aimed at random, failed to touch me. I at length was

fortunate

fortunate enough to lay one of my adverſaries at my feet: but before this I had already received ſo many wounds, and was ſo warmly preſſed, that my deſtruction would have been inevitable, had not the claſhing of ſwords called a cavalier to my aſſiſtance. He ran towards me with his ſword drawn: ſeveral domeſtics followed him with torches. His arrival made the combat equal: yet would not the bravoes abandon their deſign, till their ſervants were on the point of joining us. They then fled away, and we loſt them in the obſcurity.

The ſtranger now addreſſed himſelf to me with politeneſs, and enquired whether I was wounded. Faint with the loſs of blood, I could ſcarcely thank him for his ſeaſonable aid, and entreat him to let ſome of his ſervants convey me to the hotel de las Ciſternas. I no ſooner mentioned the name than he profeſſed himſelf an acquaintance of my father's, and declared that he would not permit my being tranſported to

ſuch a diſtance before my wounds had been examined. He added, that his houſe was hard by, and begged me to accompany him thither. His manner was ſo earneſt, that I could not reject his offer; and, leaning upon his arm, a few minutes brought me to the porch of a magnificent hotel.

On entering the houſe, an old grey-headed domeſtic came to welcome my conductor: he enquired when the duke, his maſter, meant to quit the country, and was anſwered, that he would remain there yet ſome months. My deliverer then deſired the family ſurgeon to be ſummoned without delay: his orders were obeyed. I was ſeated upon a ſopha in a noble apartment; and my wounds being examined, they were declared to be very ſlight. The ſurgeon, however, adviſed me not to expoſe myſelf to the night air; and the ſtranger preſſed me ſo earneſtly to take a bed in his houſe, that I conſented to remain where I was for the preſent.

Being now left alone with my deliverer, I took the opportunity of thanking him in more

more expreſs terms than I had done hitherto; but he begged me to be ſilent upon the ſubject.

"I eſteem myſelf happy," ſaid he, "in having had it in my power to render you this little ſervice; and I ſhall think myſelf eternally obliged to my daughter for detaining me ſo late at the convent of St. Clare. The high eſteem in which I have ever held the marquis de las Ciſternas, though accident has not permitted our being ſo intimate as I could wiſh, makes me rejoice in the opportunity of making his ſon's acquaintance. I am certain that my brother, in whoſe houſe you now are, will lament his not being at Madrid to receive you himſelf: but, in the duke's abſence, I am maſter of the family, and may aſſure you, in his name, that every thing in the hotel de Medina is perfectly at your diſpoſal."

Conceive my ſurpriſe, Lorenzo, at diſcovering, in the perſon of my preſerver, Don Gaſton de Medina. It was only to be equalled by my ſecret ſatisfaction at the aſ-

ſurance, that Agnes inhabited the convent of St. Clare. This latter ſenſation was not a little weakened, when, in anſwer to my ſeemingly indifferent queſtions, he told me that his daughter had really taken the veil. I ſuffered not my grief at this circumſtance to take root in my mind: I flattered myſelf with the idea, that my uncle's credit at the court of Rome would remove this obſtacle, and that, without difficulty, I ſhould obtain for my miſtreſs a diſpenſation from her vows. Buoyed up with this hope, I calmed the uneaſineſs of my boſom; and I redoubled my endeavours to appear grateful for the attention, and pleaſed with the ſociety, of Don Gaſton.

A domeſtic now entered the room, and informed me that the bravo whom I had wounded, diſcovered ſome ſigns of life. I deſired that he might be carried to my father's hotel, and ſaid that, as ſoon as he recovered his voice, I would examine him reſpecting his reaſons for attempting my life. I was anſwered, that he was already able to ſpeak,

though

though with difficulty. Don Gaſton's curioſity made him preſs me to interrogate the aſſaſſin in his preſence; but this curioſity I was by no means inclined to gratify. One reaſon was, that, doubting from whence the blow came, I was unwilling to place before Don Gaſton's eyes the guilt of a ſiſter. Another was, that I feared to be recognized for Alphonſo d'Alvarada, and precautions taken in conſequence to keep me from the ſight of Agnes. To avow my paſſion for his daughter, and endeavour to make him enter into my ſchemes, what I knew of Don Gaſton's character convinced me would be an imprudent ſtep; and conſidering it to be eſſential that he ſhould know me for no other than the condé de las Ciſternas, I was determined not to let him hear the bravo's confeſſion. I inſinuated to him, that as I ſuſpected a lady to be concerned in the buſineſs, whoſe name might accidentally eſcape from the aſſaſſin, it was neceſſary for me to examine the man in private. Don Gaſton's delicacy would not permit his

urging the point any longer, and, in conſequence, the bravo was conveyed to my hotel.

The next morning I took leave of my hoſt, who was to return to the duke on the ſame day. My wounds had been ſo trifling, that, except being obliged to wear my arm in a ſling for a ſhort time, I felt no inconvenience from the night's adventure. The ſurgeon who examined the bravo's wound declared it to be mortal: he had juſt time to confeſs, that he had been inſtigated to murder me by the revengeful Donna Rodolpha, and expired in a few minutes after.

All my thoughts were now bent upon getting to the ſpeech of my lovely nun. Theodore ſet himſelf to work, and, for this time, with better ſucceſs. He attacked the gardener of St. Clare ſo forcibly with bribes and promiſes, that the old man was entirely gained over to my intereſts; and it was ſettled that I ſhould be introduced into the convent in the character of his aſſiſtant.

The

The plan was put into execution without delay. Diſguiſed in a common habit, and a black patch covering one of my eyes, I was preſented to the lady prioreſs, who condeſcended to approve of the gardener's choice. I immediately entered upon my employment. Botany having been a favourite ſtudy with me, I was by no means at a loſs in my new ſtation. For ſome days I continued to work in the convent-garden without meeting the object of my diſguiſe. On the fourth morning I was more ſucceſsful. I heard the voice of Agnes, and was ſpeeding towards the ſound, when the ſight of the domina ſtopped me. I drew back with caution, and concealed myſelf behind a thick clump of trees.

The prioreſs advanced, and ſeated herſelf with Agnes on a bench at no great diſtance. I heard her, in an angry tone, blame her companion's continual melancholy. She told her, that to weep the loſs of any lover, in her ſituation, was a crime; but that to weep the loſs of a faithleſs one was folly

and abſurdity in the extreme. Agnes replied in ſo low a voice that I could not diſtinguiſh her words, but I perceived that ſhe uſed terms of gentleneſs and ſubmiſſion. The converſation was interrupted by the arrival of a young penſioner, who informed the domina that ſhe was waited for in the parlour. The old lady roſe, kiſſed the cheek of Agnes, and retired. The newcomer remained. Agnes ſpoke much to her in praiſe of ſomebody whom I could not make out; but her auditor ſeemed highly delighted, and intereſted by the converſation. The nun ſhewed her ſeveral letters: the other peruſed them with evident pleaſure, obtained permiſſion to copy them, and withdrew for that purpoſe to my great ſatisfaction.

No ſooner was ſhe out of ſight, than I quitted my concealment. Fearing to alarm my lovely miſtreſs, I drew near her gently, intending to diſcover myſelf by degrees. But who for a moment can deceive the eyes of love? She raiſed her head at my approach,

and

and recogniſed me, in ſpite of my diſguiſe, at a ſingle glance. She roſe haſtily from her ſeat with an exclamation of ſurpriſe, and attempted to retire: but I followed her, detained her, and entreated to be heard. Perſuaded of my falſehood, ſhe refuſed to liſten to me, and ordered me poſitively to quit the garden. It was now my turn to refuſe. I proteſted that, however dangerous might be the conſequences, I would not leave her till ſhe had heard my juſtification. I aſſured her, that ſhe had been deceived by the artifices of her relations: that I could convince her, beyond the power of doubt, that my paſſion had been pure and diſintereſted; and I aſked her what ſhould induce me to ſeek her in the convent, were I influenced by the ſelfiſh motives which my enemies had aſcribed to me.

My prayers, my arguments, and vows not to quit her till ſhe had promiſed to liſten to me, united to her fears leſt the nuns ſhould ſee me with her, to her natural curioſity, and to the affection which ſhe ſtill felt for

me, in ſpite of my ſuppoſed deſertion, at length prevailed. She told me, that to grant my requeſt at that moment was impoſſible; but ſhe engaged to be in the ſame ſpot at eleven that night, and to converſe with me for the laſt time. Having obtained this promiſe, I releaſed her hand, and ſhe fled back with rapidity towards the convent.

I communicated my ſucceſs to my ally, the old gardener: he pointed out an hiding-place, where I might ſhelter myſelf till night without fear of a diſcovery. Thither I betook myſelf at the hour when I ought to have retired with my ſuppoſed maſter, and waited impatiently for the appointed time. The chillneſs of the night was in my favour, ſince it kept the other nuns confined to their cells. Agnes alone was inſenſible of the inclemency of the air, and, before eleven, joined me at the ſpot which had witneſſed our former interview. Secure from interruption, I related to her the true cauſe of my diſappearing on the fatal fifth of May.

She was evidently much affected by my narrative. When it was concluded, ſhe confeſſed the injuſtice of her ſuſpicions, and blamed herſelf for having taken the veil through deſpair at my ingratitude.

"But now it is too late to repine!" ſhe added; "the die is thrown: I have pronounced my vows, and dedicated myſelf to the ſervice of heaven. I am ſenſible how ill I am calculated for a convent. My diſguſt at a monaſtic life increaſes daily: ennui and diſcontent are my conſtant companions; and I will not conceal from you, that the paſſion which I formerly felt for one ſo near being my huſband, is not yet extinguiſhed in my boſom: but we muſt part! Inſuperable barriers divide us from each other, and on this ſide the grave we muſt never meet again!"

I now exerted myſelf to prove, that our union was not ſo impoſſible as ſhe ſeemed to think it. I vaunted to her the cardinal-duke of Lerma's influence at the court of Rome. I aſſured her, that I ſhould eaſily

obtain

obtain a diſpenſation from her vows; and I doubted not but Don Gaſton would coincide with my views, when informed of my real name and long attachment. Agnes replied, that ſince I encouraged ſuch an hope, I could know but little of her father. Liberal and kind in every other reſpect, ſuperſtition formed the only ſtain upon his character. Upon this head he was inflexible: he ſacrificed his deareſt intereſts to his ſcruples, and would conſider it an inſult to ſuppoſe him capable of authoriſing his daughter to break her vows to heaven.

"But ſuppoſe," ſaid I, interrupting her—"ſuppoſe that he ſhould diſapprove of our union: let him remain ignorant of my proceedings till I have reſcued you from the priſon in which you are now confined. Once my wife, you are free from his authority. I need from him no pecuniary aſſiſtance; and when he ſees his reſentment to be unavailing, he will doubtleſs reſtore you to his favour. But, let the worſt happen; ſhould Don Gaſton be irreconcileable, my relations will

will vie with each other in making you forget his loſs; and you will find in my father a ſubſtitute for the parent of whom I ſhall deprive you."

"Don Raymond," replied Agnes, in a firm and reſolute voice, "I love my father: he has treated me harſhly in this one inſtance; but I have received from him, in every other, ſo many proofs of love, that his affection is become neceſſary to my exiſtence. Were I to quit the convent, he never would forgive me; nor can I think that, on his death-bed, he would leave me his curſe, without ſhuddering at the very idea. Beſides, I am conſcious myſelf, that my vows are binding. Wilfully did I contract my engagement with heaven: I cannot break it without a crime. Then baniſh from your mind the idea of our being ever united. I am devoted to religion; and however I may grieve at our ſeparation, I would oppoſe obſtacles myſelf, to what I feel would render me guilty."

I ſtrove to over-rule theſe ill-grounded

ſcruples.

ſcruples. We were ſtill diſputing upon the ſubject, when the convent bell ſummoned the nuns to matins. Agnes was obliged to attend them; but ſhe left me not till I had compelled her to promiſe, that on the following night ſhe would be at the ſame place at the ſame hour. Theſe meetings continued for ſeveral weeks uninterrupted: and 'tis now, Lorenzo, that I muſt implore your indulgence. Reflect upon our ſituation, our youth, our long attachment. Weigh all the circumſtances which attended our aſſignations, and you will confeſs the temptation to have been irreſiſtible: you will even pardon me when I acknowledge that, in an unguarded moment, the honour of Agnes was ſacrificed to my paſſion."

[Lorenzo's eyes ſparkled with fury; a deep crimſon ſpread itſelf over his face: he ſtarted from his ſeat, and attempted to draw his ſword. The marquis was aware of his movement, and caught his hand: he preſſed it affectionately:

"My friend! my brother! hear me to the

the concluſion! Till then reſtrain your paſſion; and be at leaſt convinced, that if what I have related is criminal, the blame muſt fall upon me, and not upon your ſiſter."

Lorenzo ſuffered himſelf to be prevailed upon by Don Raymond's entreaties: he reſumed his place, and liſtened to the reſt of the narrative with a gloomy and impatient countenance. The marquis thus continued:]

Scarcely was the firſt burſt of paſſion paſt, when Agnes, recovering herſelf, ſtarted from my arms with horror. She called me infamous ſeducer, loaded me with the bittereſt reproaches, and beat her boſom in all the wildneſs of delirium. Aſhamed of my imprudence, I with difficulty found words to excuſe myſelf. I endeavoured to conſole her: I threw myſelf at her feet, and entreated her forgiveneſs. She forced her hand from me, which I had taken and would have preſſed to my lips.

"Touch me not!" ſhe cried, with a violence

violence which terrified me. "Monſter of perfidy and ingratitude, how have I been deceived in you! I looked upon you as my friend, my protector: I truſted myſelf in your hands with confidence, and, relying upon your honour, thought that mine ran no riſk: and 'tis by you, whom I adored, that I am covered with infamy! 'Tis by you that I have been ſeduced into breaking my vows to God, that I am reduced to a level with the baſeſt of my ſex! Shame upon you, villain, you ſhall never ſee me more!"

She ſtarted from the bank on which ſhe was ſeated. I endeavoured to detain her; but ſhe diſengaged herſelf from me with violence, and took refuge in the convent.

I retired, filled with confuſion and inquietude. The next morning I failed not, as uſual, to appear in the garden; but Agnes was no where to be ſeen. At night I waited for her at the place where we generally met. I found no better ſucceſs. Several days and nights paſſed away in the ſame manner. At length

length I ſaw my offended miſtreſs croſs the walk, on whoſe borders I was working. She was accompanied by the ſame young penſioner, on whoſe arm ſhe ſeemed, from weakneſs, obliged to ſupport herſelf. She looked upon me for a moment, but inſtantly turned her head away. I waited her return; but ſhe paſſed on to the convent without paying any attentiou to me, or the penitent looks with which I implored her forgiveneſs.

As ſoon as the nuns were retired, the old gardener joined me with a ſorrowful air.

"Segnor," ſaid he, "it grieves me to ſay, that I can be no longer of uſe to you; the lady whom you uſed to meet has juſt aſſured me, that if I admitted you again into the garden, ſhe would diſcover the whole buſineſs to the lady prioreſs. She bade me tell you alſo, that your preſence was an inſult, and that, if you ſtill poſſeſs the leaſt reſpect for her, you will never attempt to ſee her more. Excuſe me then

for

for informing you, that I can favour your diſguiſe no longer. Should the prioreſs be acquainted with my conduct, ſhe might not be contented with diſmiſſing me her ſervice: out of revenge, ſhe might accuſe me of having profaned the convent, and cauſe me to be thrown into the priſons of the Inquiſition."

Fruitleſs were my attempts to conquer his reſolution. He denied me all future entrance into the garden; and Agnes perſevered in neither letting me ſee or hear from her. In about a fortnight after, a violent illneſs which had ſeized my father obliged me to ſet out for Andaluſia. I haſtened thither, and, as I imagined, found the marquis at the point of death. Though, on its firſt appearance, his complaint was declared mortal, he lingered out ſeveral months; during which, my attendance upon him in his malady, and the occupation of ſettling his affairs after his deceaſe, permitted not my quitting Andaluſia. Within theſe four days I returned to Madrid, and, on arriving

riving at my hotel, I there found this letter waiting for me.

[Here the marquis unlocked a drawer of a cabinet; he took out a folded paper, which he presented to his auditor. Lorenzo opened it, and recognised his sister's hand. The contents were as follows:

"Into what an abyss of misery have you "plunged me! Raymond, you force me "to become as criminal as yourself. I had "resolved never to see you more; if pos-"sible, to forget you; if not, only to re-"member you with hate. A being, for "whom I already feel a mother's tenderness, "solicits me to pardon my seducer, and ap-"ply to his love for the means of preserva-"tion. Raymond, your child lives in my "bosom. I tremble at the vengeance of the "prioress. I tremble much for myself, yet "more for the innocent creature whose ex-"istence depends upon mine. Both of us are "lost, should my situation be discovered. "Advise me; then, what steps to take, but "seek

" ſeek not to ſee me. The gardener, who un-
" dertakes to deliver this, is diſmiſſed, and
" we have nothing to hope from that quarter.
" The man engaged in his place is of incor-
" ruptible fidelity. The beſt means of con-
" veying to me your anſwer, is by conceal-
" ing it under the great ſtatue of St. Francis,
" which ſtands in the Capuchin cathedral;
" thither I go every Thurſday to confeſſion,
" and ſhall eaſily have an opportunity of ſe-
" curing your letter. I hear that you are now
" abſent from Madrid. Need I entreat you
" write the very moment of your return? I
" will not think it. Ah! Raymond! mine
" is a cruel ſituation! Deceived by my near-
" eſt relations, compelled to embrace a pro-
" feſſion, the duties of which I am ill cal-
" culated to perform, conſcious of the
" ſanctity of thoſe duties, and ſeduced into
" violating them by one whom I leaſt ſuſ-
" pected of perfidy, I am now obliged, by
" circumſtances, to chooſe between death
" and perjury. Woman's timidity, and ma-
" ternal affection, permit me not to balance
" in the choice. I feel all the guilt into which

" I plunge

"I plunge myſelf when I yield to the plan
"which you before propoſed to me. My
"poor father's death, which has taken place
"ſince we met, has removed one obſtacle.
"He ſleeps in his grave, and I no longer
"dread his anger. But from the anger of
"God, oh! Raymond! who ſhall ſhield
"me? Who can protect me againſt my
"conſcience, againſt myſelf? I dare not
"dwell upon theſe thoughts; they will
"drive me mad. I have taken my reſolu-
"tion. Procure a diſpenſation from my
"vows. I am ready to fly with you. Write
"to me, my huſband! Tell me that ab-
"ſence has not abated your love! Tell
"me that you will reſcue from death your
"unborn child, and its unhappy mother.
"I live in all the agonies of terror. Every
"eye which is fixed upon me, ſeems to read
"my ſecret and my ſhame. And you are
"the cauſe of thoſe agonies! Oh! when
"my heart firſt loved you, how little did it
"ſuſpect you of making it feel ſuch pangs!

"AGNES."

Having peruſed the letter, Lorenzo reſtored it in ſilence. The marquis replaced it in the cabinet, and then proceeded:]

Exceſſive was my joy at reading this intelligence, ſo earneſtly deſired, ſo little expected. My plan was ſoon arranged. When Don Gaſton diſcovered to me his daughter's retreat, I entertained no doubt of her readineſs to quit the convent: I had, therefore, entruſted the cardinal-duke of Lerma with the whole affair, who immediately buſied himſelf in obtaining the neceſſary bull. Fortunately, I had afterwards neglected to ſtop his proceedings. Not long ſince I received a letter from him, ſtating that he expected daily to receive the order from the court of Rome. Upon this I would willingly have relied; but the cardinal wrote me word, that I muſt find ſome means of conveying Agnes out of the convent, unknown to the prioreſs. He doubted not but this latter would be much incenſed by loſing a perſon of ſuch high rank from her ſociety, and conſider the renunciation of Agnes as an inſult to her

houſe.

houſe. He repreſented her as a woman of a violent and revengeful character, capable of proceeding to the greateſt extremities. It was therefore to be feared leſt, by confining Agnes in the convent, ſhe ſhould fruſtrate my hopes, and render the pope's mandate unavailing. Influenced by this conſideration, I reſolved to carry off my miſtreſs, and conceal her till the arrival of the expected bull in the cardinal-duke's eſtate. He approved of my deſign, and profeſſed himſelf ready to give a ſhelter to the fugitive. I next cauſed the new gardener of St. Clare to be ſeized privately, and confined in my hotel. By this means I became maſter of the key to the garden-door, and I had now nothing more to do than prepare Agnes for the elopement. This was done by the letter which you ſaw me deliver this evening. I told her in it, that I ſhould be ready to receive her at twelve to-morrow night; that I had ſecured the key of the garden, and that ſhe might depend upon a ſpeedy releaſe.

You have now, Lorenzo, heard the whole of my long narrative. I have nothing to ſay in my excuſe, ſave that my intentions towards your ſiſter have been ever the moſt honourable: that it has always been, and ſtill is, my deſign to make her my wife; and that I truſt, when you conſider theſe circumſtances, our youth, and our attachment, you will not only forgive our momentary lapſe from virtue, but will aid me in repairing my faults to Agnes, and ſecuring a lawful title to her perſon and her heart.

CHAP. V.

O you! whom Vanity's light bark conveys
On Fame's mad voyage by the wind of Praiſe,
With what a ſhifting gale your courſe you ply,
For ever ſunk too low, or borne too high!
Who pants for glory finds but ſhort repoſe:
A breath revives him, and a breath o'erthrows.

POPE.

HERE the marquis concluded his adventures. Lorenzo, before he could determine on his reply, paſſed ſome moments in reflection. At length he broke ſilence.

"Raymond," ſaid he, taking his hand, "ſtrict honour would oblige me to waſh off in your blood the ſtain thrown upon my family; but the circumſtances of your caſe forbid me to conſider you as an enemy. The temptation was too great to be reſiſted. 'Tis the ſuperſtition of my relations which has

occaſioned theſe misfortunes, and they are more the offenders than yourſelf and Agnes. What has paſſed between you cannot be recalled, but may yet be repaired by uniting you to my ſiſter. You have ever been, you ſtill continue to be, my deareſt, and indeed my only friend. I feel for Agnes the trueſt affection, and there is no one on whom I would beſtow her more willingly than on yourſelf. Purſue, then, your deſign. I will accompany you to-morrow night, and conduct her myſelf to the houſe of the cardinal. My preſence will be a ſanction for her conduct, and prevent her incurring blame by her flight from the convent."

The marquis thanked him in terms by no means deficient in gratitude. Lorenzo then informed him, that he had nothing more to apprehend from Donna Rodolpha's enmity. Five months had already elapſed ſince, in an acceſs of paſſion, ſhe broke a blood-veſſel, and expired in the courſe of a few hours. He then proceeded to mention the intereſts of Antonia. The marquis was much ſur-

priſed

priſed at hearing of this new relation. His father had carried his hatred of Elvira to the grave, and had never given the leaſt hint that he knew what was become of his eldeſt ſon's widow. Don Raymond aſſured his friend, that he was not miſtaken in ſuppoſing him ready to acknowledge his ſiſter-in-law, and her amiable daughter. The preparations for the elopement would not permit his viſiting them the next day; but, in the mean while, he deſired Lorenzo to aſſure them of his friendſhip, and to ſupply Elvira, upon his account, with any ſums which ſhe might want. This the youth promiſed to do, as ſoon as her abode ſhould be known to him. He then took leave of his future brother, and returned to the palace de Medina.

The day was already on the point of breaking when the marquis retired to his chamber. Conſcious that his narrative would take up ſome hours, and wiſhing to ſecure himſelf from interruption, on returning to the hotel he ordered his attendants not to ſit up for

him; conſequently, he was ſomewhat ſurpriſed, on entering his anti-room, to find Theodore eſtabliſhed there. The page ſat near a table with a pen in his hand, and was ſo totally occupied by his employment, that he perceived not his lord's approach. The marquis ſtopped to obſerve him. Theodore wrote a few lines, then pauſed, and ſcratched out a part of the writing; then wrote again, ſmiled, and ſeemed highly pleaſed with what he had been about. At laſt he threw down his pen, ſprang from his chair, and clapped his hands together joyfully.

"There it is!" cried he aloud: "now they are charming!"

His tranſports were interrupted by a laugh from the marquis, who ſuſpected the nature of his employment.

"What is ſo charming, Theodore?"

The youth ſtarted, and looked round: he bluſhed, ran to the table, ſeized the paper on which he had been writing, and concealed it in confuſion.

"Oh! my lord, I knew not that you were

ſo

ſo near me. Can I be of uſe to you? Lucas is already gone to bed."

"I ſhall follow his example when I have given my opinion of your verſes."

"My verſes, my lord?"

"Nay, I am ſure that you have been writing ſome, for nothing elſe could have kept you awake till this time of the morning. Where are they, Theodore? I ſhall like to ſee your compoſition."

Theodore's cheeks glowed with ſtill deeper crimſon: he longed to ſhew his poetry, but firſt choſe to be preſſed for it.

"Indeed, my lord, they are not worthy your attention."

"Not theſe verſes, which you juſt now declared to be ſo charming? Come, come, let me ſee whether our opinions are the ſame. I promiſe that you ſhall find in me an indulgent critic."

The boy produced his paper with ſeeming reluctance; but the ſatisfaction which ſparkled in his dark expreſſive eyes betrayed the vanity of his little boſom. The

marquis ſmiled while he obſerved the emotions of an heart as yet but little ſkilled in veiling its ſentiments. He ſeated himſelf upon a ſopha. Theodore, while hope and fear contended on his anxious countenance, waited with inquietude for his maſter's deciſion, while the marquis read the following lines:

LOVE AND AGE.

THE night was dark; the wind blew cold;
Anacreon, grown moroſe and old,
Sat by his fire, and fed the cheerful flame:
Sudden the cottage-door expands,
And, lo! before him Cupid ſtands,
Caſts round a friendly glance, and greets him by his name.

"What! is it thou?" the ſtartled ſire
In ſullen tone exclaimed, while ire
With crimſon fluſhed his pale and wrinkled cheek:
"Wouldſt thou again with amorous rage
Inflame my boſom? Steeled by age,
Vain boy, to pierce my breaſt thine arrows are too weak.

"What ſeek you in this deſert drear?
No ſmiles or ſports inhabit here;
Ne'er did theſe valleys witneſs dalliance ſweet:
Eternal winter binds the plains;
Age in my houſe deſpotic reigns;
My garden boaſts no flower, my boſom boaſts no heat.

"Begone,

" Begone, and ſeek the blooming bower,
Where ſome ripe virgin courts thy power,
Or bid provoking dreams flit round her bed;
On Damon's amorous breaſt repoſe;
Wanton on Chloe's lip of roſe,
Or make her bluſhing cheek a pillow for thy head.

" Be ſuch thy haunts! Theſe regions cold
Avoid! Nor think grown wiſe and old
This hoary head again thy yoke ſhall bear:
Remembering that my faireſt years
By thee were marked with ſighs and tears,
I think thy friendſhip falſe, and ſhun the guileful ſnare.

" I have not yet forgot the pains
I felt, while bound in Julia's chains:
The ardent flames with which my boſom burned;
The nights I paſſed deprived of reſt;
The jealous pangs which racked my breaſt;
My diſappointed hopes, and paſſion unreturned.

" Then fly, and curſe mine eyes no more!
Fly from my peaceful cottage-door!
No day, no hour, no moment ſhalt thou ſtay.
I know thy falſehood, ſcorn thy arts,
Diſtruſt thy ſmiles, and fear thy darts:
Traitor, begone, and ſeek ſome other to betray!"—

" Does age, old man, your wits confound?"
Replied the offended god, and frowned:
(His frown was ſweet as is the virgin's ſmile!)

" Do you to me theſe words addreſs?
To me, who do not love you leſs,
Though you my friendſhip ſcorn, and pleaſures paſt revile!

" If one proud fair you chanced to find,
An hundred other nymphs were kind,
Whoſe ſmiles might well for Julia's frowns atone:
But ſuch is man! his partial hand
Unnumbered favours writes on ſand,
But ſtamps one little fault on ſolid laſting ſtone.

" Ingrate! Who led you to the wave,
At noon where Leſbia loved to lave?
Who named the bower alone where Daphne lay?
And who, when Celia ſhrieked for aid,
Bade you with kiſſes huſh the maid?
What other was't than Love, oh! falſe Anacreon, ſay!

" Then you could call me—' Gentle boy!
' My only bliſs! my ſource of joy!'
Then you could prize me dearer than your ſoul!
Could kiſs, and dance me on your knees;
And ſwear, not wine itſelf would pleaſe,
Had not the lip of Love firſt touched the flowing bowl!

" Muſt thoſe ſweet days return no more?
Muſt I for aye your loſs deplore,
Baniſhed your heart, and from your favour driven?
Ah! no; my fears that ſmile denies;
That heaving breaſt, thoſe ſparkling eyes
Declare me ever dear, and all my faults forgiven.

" Again

" Again beloved, eſteemed, careſſed,
Cupid ſhall in thine arms be preſſed,
Sport on thy knees, or on thy boſom ſleep:
My torch thine age-ſtruck heart ſhall warm;
My hand pale winter's rage diſarm,
And Youth and Spring ſhall here once more their revels keep."—

A feather now of golden hue
He ſmiling from his pinion drew;
This to the poet's hand the boy commits;
And ſtraight before Anacreon's eyes
The faireſt dreams of fancy riſe,
And round his favoured head wild inſpiration flits.

His boſom glows with amorous fire;
Eager he graſps the magic lyre;
Swift o'er the tuneful chords his fingers move:
The feather plucked from Cupid's wing
Sweeps the too-long neglected ſtring,
While ſoft Anacreon ſings the power and praiſe of love.

Soon as that name was heard, the woods
Shook off their ſnows; the melting floods
Broke their cold chains, and winter fled away.
Once more the earth was decked with flowers;
Mild zephyrs breathed through blooming bowers;
High towered the glorious ſun, and poured the blaze of day.

Attracted by the harmonious ſound,
Sylvans and fauns the cot ſurround,
And curious crowd the minſtrel to behold:
The wood-nymphs haſte the ſpell to prove;
Eager they run; they liſt, they love,
And, while they hear the ſtrain, forget the man is old.

Cupid, to nothing conſtant long,
Perched on the harp attends the ſong,
Or ſtifles with a kiſs the dulcet notes:
Now on the poet's breaſt repoſes,
Now twines his hoary locks with roſes,
Or borne on wings of gold in wanton circle floats.

Then thus Anacreon—"I no more
At other ſhrines my vows will pour,
Since Cupid deigns my numbers to inſpire:
From Phœbus or the blue-eyed maid
Now ſhall my verſe requeſt no aid,
For Love alone ſhall be the patron of my lyre.

"In lofty ſtrain, of earlier days,
I ſpread the king's or hero's praiſe,
And ſtruck the martial chords with epic fire:
But farewell, hero! farewell, king!
Your deeds my lips no more ſhall ſing,
For Love alone ſhall be the ſubject of my lyre."

The marquis returned the paper with a ſmile of encouragement.

"Your

"Your little poem pleaſes me much," ſaid he: "however, you muſt not count my opinion for any thing. I am no judge of verſes, and for my own part never compoſed more than ſix lines in my life: thoſe ſix produced ſo unlucky an effect, that I am fully reſolved never to compoſe another. But I wander from my ſubject. I was going to ſay that you cannot employ your time worſe than in making verſes. An author, whether good or bad, or between both, is an animal whom every body is privileged to attack: for though all are not able to write books, all conceive themſelves able to judge them. A bad compoſition carries with it its own puniſhment—contempt and ridicule. A good one excites envy, and entails upon its author a thouſand mortifications: he finds himſelf aſſailed by partial and ill-humoured criticiſm: one man finds fault with the plan, another with the ſtyle, a third with the precept which it ſtrives to inculcate; and they who cannot ſucceed in finding fault with the book,

employ

employ themſelves in ſtigmatizing its author. They maliciouſly rake out from obſcurity every little circumſtance which may throw ridicule upon his private character or conduct, and aim at wounding the man ſince they cannot hurt the writer. In ſhort, to enter the liſts of literature is wilfully to expoſe yourſelf to the arrows of neglect, ridicule, envy, and diſappointment. Whether you write well or ill, be aſſured that you will not eſcape from blame. Indeed this circumſtance contains a young author's chief conſolation: he remembers that Lope de Vega and Calderona had unjuſt and envious critics, and he modeſtly conceives himſelf to be exactly in their predicament. But I am conſcious that all theſe ſage obſervations are thrown away upon you. Authorſhip is a mania, to conquer which no reaſons are ſufficiently ſtrong; and you might as eaſily perſuade me not to love, as I perſuade you not to write. However, if you cannot help being occaſionally ſeized with a poetical paroxyſm, take at leaſt the

precaution

precaution of communicating your verſes to none but thoſe whoſe partiality for you ſecures their approbation."

"Then, my lord, you do not think theſe lines tolerable?" ſaid Theodore, with an humble and dejected air.

"You miſtake my meaning. As I ſaid before, they have pleaſed me much: but my regard for you makes me partial, and others might judge them leſs favourably. I muſt ſtill remark, that even my prejudice in your favour does not blind me ſo much as to prevent my obſerving ſeveral faults. For inſtance, you make a terrible confuſion of metaphors; you are too apt to make the ſtrength of your lines conſiſt more in the words than ſenſe; ſome of the verſes ſeem introduced only in order to rhyme with others; and moſt of the beſt ideas are borrowed from other poets, though poſſibly you are unconſcious of the theft yourſelf. Theſe faults may occaſionally be excuſed in a work of length; but a ſhort poem muſt be correct and perfect."

"All

"All this is true, ſegnor; but you ſhould conſider that I only write for pleaſure."

"Your defects are the leſs excuſable. Their incorrectneſs may be forgiven, who work for money, who are obliged to complete a given taſk in a given time, and are paid according to the bulk, not value, of their productions. But in thoſe whom no neceſſity forces to turn author, who merely write for fame, and have full leiſure to poliſh their compoſitions, faults are unpardonable, and merit the ſharpeſt arrows of criticiſm."

The marquis roſe from the ſopha; the page looked diſcouraged and melancholy; and this did not eſcape his maſter's obſervation.

"However," added he, ſmiling, "I think that theſe lines do you no diſcredit. Your verſification is tolerably eaſy, and your ear ſeems to be juſt. The peruſal of your little poem upon the whole gave me much pleaſure; and if it is not aſking too great a favour,

vour, I ſhall be highly obliged to you for a copy."

The youth's countenance immediately cleared up. He perceived not the ſmile, half approving, half ironical, which accompanied the requeſt, and he promiſed the copy with great readineſs. The marquis withdrew to his chamber, much amuſed by the inſtantaneous effect produced upon Theodore's vanity by the concluſion of his criticiſm. He threw himſelf upon his couch, ſleep ſoon ſtole over him, and his dreams preſented him with the moſt flattering pictures of happineſs with Agnes.

On reaching the hotel de Medina, Lorenzo's firſt care was to enquire for letters. He found ſeveral waiting for him; but that which he ſought was not amongſt them. Leonella had found it impoſſible to write that evening. However, her impatience to ſecure Don Chriſtoval's heart, on which ſhe flattered herſelf with having made no ſlight impreſſion, permitted her not to paſs another day without informing him where ſhe

ſhe was to be found. On her return from the Capuchin-church, ſhe had related to her ſiſter, with exultation, how attentive an handſome cavalier had been to her; as alſo how his companion had undertaken to plead Antonia's cauſe with the marquis de las Ciſternas. Elvira received this intelligence with ſenſations very different from thoſe with which it was communicated. She blamed her ſiſter's imprudence in confiding her hiſtory to an abſolute ſtranger, and expreſſed her fears leſt this inconſiderate ſtep ſhould prejudice the marquis againſt her. The greateſt of her apprehenſions ſhe concealed in her own breaſt. She had obſerved, with inquietude, that at the mention of Lorenzo a deep bluſh ſpread itſelf over her daughter's cheek. The timid Antonia dared not to pronounce his name. Without knowing wherefore, ſhe felt embarraſſed when he was made the ſubject of diſcourſe, and endeavoured to change the converſation to Ambroſio. Elvira perceived the emotions of this young boſom: in conſequence, ſhe

insisted upon Leonella's breaking her promise to the cavaliers. A sigh, which on hearing this order escaped from Antonia, confirmed the wary mother in her resolution.

Through this resolution Leonella was determined to break: she conceived it to be inspired by envy, and that her sister dreaded her being elevated above her. Without imparting her design to any one, she took an opportunity of dispatching the following note to Lorenzo: it was delivered to him as soon as he woke:

"Doubtless, Segnor Don Lorenzo, you have frequently accused me of ingratitude and forgetfulness: but on the word of a virgin it was out of my power to perform my promise yesterday. I know not in what words to inform you, how strange a reception my sister gave your kind wish to visit her. She is an odd woman, with many good points about her; but her jealousy of me frequently makes her conceive notions quite unaccountable. On hearing that your friend had

had paid ſome little attention to me, ſhe immediately took the alarm: ſhe blamed my conduct, and has abſolutely forbidden me to let you know our abode. My ſtrong ſenſe of gratitude for your kind offers of ſervice, and——ſhall I confeſs it? my deſire to behold once more the too amiable Don Chriſtoval, will not permit my obeying her injunctions. I have therefore ſtolen a moment to inform you, that we lodge in the ſtrada di San Jago, four doors from the palace d'Albornos, and nearly oppoſite to the barber's Miguel Coello. Enquire for Donna Elvira Dalfa, ſince, in compliance with her father-in-law's order, my ſiſter continues to be called by her maiden name. At eight this evening you will be ſure of finding us: but let not a word drop, which may raiſe a ſuſpicion of my having written this letter. Should you ſee the Condé d'Oſſorio, tell him——I bluſh while I declare it——tell him that his preſence will be but too acceptable to the ſympathetic

"LEONELLA."

The

The latter ſentences were written in red ink, to expreſs the bluſhes of her cheek while ſhe committed an outrage upon her virgin modeſty.

Lorenzo had no ſooner peruſed this note, than he ſet out in ſearch of Don Chriſtoval. Not being able to find him in the courſe of the day, he proceeded to Donna Elvira's alone, to Leonella's infinite diſappointment. The domeſtic by whom he ſent up his name having already declared his lady to be at home, ſhe had no excuſe for refuſing his viſit: yet ſhe conſented to receive it with much reluctance. That reluctance was increaſed by the changes which his approach produced in Antonia's countenance; nor was it by any means abated, when the youth himſelf appeared. The ſymmetry of his perſon, animation of his features, and natural elegance of his manners and addreſs, convinced Elvira that ſuch a gueſt muſt be dangerous for her daughter. She reſolved to treat him with diſtant politeneſs, to decline his ſervices

vices with gratitude for the tender of them, and to make him feel, without offence, that his future viſits would be far from acceptable.

On his entrance he found Elvira, who was indiſpoſed, reclining upon a ſopha; Antonia ſat by her embroidery frame; and Leonella, in a paſtoral dreſs, held "*Montemayor's Diana.*" In ſpite of her being the mother of Antonia, Lorenzo could not help expecting to find in Elvira Leonella's true ſiſter, and the daughter of "as honeſt a pains-taking ſhoemaker as any in Cordova." A ſingle glance was ſufficient to undeceive him. He beheld a woman whoſe features, though impaired by time and ſorrow, ſtill bore the marks of diſtinguiſhed beauty: a ſerious dignity reigned upon her countenance, but was tempered by a grace and ſweetneſs which rendered her truly enchanting. Lorenzo fancied that ſhe muſt have reſembled her daughter in her youth, and readily excuſed the imprudence of the late Condé de las Ciſternas. She deſired him

to

to be ſeated, and immediately reſumed her place upon the ſopha.

Antonia received him with a ſimple reverence, and continued her work: her cheeks were ſuffuſed with crimſon, and ſhe ſtrove to conceal her emotion by leaning over her embroidery frame. Her aunt alſo choſe to play off her airs of modeſty: ſhe affected to bluſh and tremble, and waited with her eyes caſt down to receive, as ſhe expected, the compliments of Don Chriſtoval. Finding, after ſome time, that no ſign of his approach was given, ſhe ventured to look round the room, and perceived with vexation that Medina was unaccompanied. Impatience would not permit her waiting for an explanation: interrupting Lorenzo, who was delivering Raymond's meſſage, ſhe deſired to know what was become of his friend.

He, who thought it neceſſary to maintain himſelf in her good graces, ſtrove to conſole her under her diſappointment by committing a little violence upon truth.

"Ah!

"Ah! ſegnora," he replied in a melancholy voice, "how grieved will he be at loſing this opportunity of paying you his reſpects! A relation's illneſs has obliged him to quit Madrid in haſte: but on his return he will doubtleſs ſeize the firſt moment with tranſport to throw himſelf at your feet!"

As he ſaid this, his eyes met thoſe of Elvira: ſhe puniſhed his falſehood ſufficiently by darting at him a look expreſſive of diſpleaſure and reproach. Neither did the deceit anſwer his intention. Vexed and diſappointed, Leonella roſe from her ſeat, and retired in dudgeon to her own apartment.

Lorenzo haſtened to repair the fault which had injured him in Elvira's opinion. He related his converſation with the marquis reſpecting her: he aſſured her that Raymond was prepared to acknowledge her for his brother's widow; and that, till it was in his power to pay his compliments to her in perſon, Lorenzo was commiſſioned

to

to ſupply his place. This intelligence relieved Elvira from an heavy weight of uneaſineſs: ſhe had now found a protector for the fatherleſs Antonia, for whoſe future fortunes ſhe had ſuffered the greateſt apprehenſions. She was not ſparing of her thanks to him, who had interfered ſo generouſly in her behalf; but ſtill ſhe gave him no invitation to repeat his viſit. However, when upon riſing to depart he requeſted permiſſion to enquire after her health occaſionally, the polite earneſtneſs of his manner, gratitude for his ſervices, and reſpect for his friend the marquis, would not admit of a refuſal. She conſented reluctantly to receive him: he promiſed not to abuſe her goodneſs, and quitted the houſe.

Antonia was now left alone with her mother: a temporary ſilence enſued. Both wiſhed to ſpeak upon the ſame ſubject, but neither knew how to introduce it. The one felt a baſhfulneſs which ſealed up her lips, and for which ſhe could not account; the other feared to find her apprehenſions true,

or to inſpire her daughter with notions to which ſhe might be ſtill a ſtranger. At length Elvira began the converſation.

" That is a charming young man, Antonia; I am much pleaſed with him. Was he long near you yeſterday in the cathedral?"

" He quitted me not for a moment while I ſtaid in the church: he gave me his ſeat, and was very obliging and attentive."

Indeed? Why then have you never mentioned his name to me? Your aunt lanched out in praiſe of his friend, and you vaunted Ambroſio's eloquence: but neither ſaid a word of Don Lorenzo's perſon and accompliſhments. Had not Leonella ſpoken of his readineſs to undertake our cauſe, I ſhould not have known him to be in exiſtence."

She pauſed. Antonia coloured, but was ſilent.

" Perhaps you judge him leſs favourably than I do. In my opinion his figure is pleaſing, his converſation ſenſible, and manners

ners engaging. Still he may have ſtruck you differently: you may think him diſagreeable, and——"

"Diſagreeable? Oh! dear mother, how ſhould I poſſibly think him ſo? I ſhould be very ungrateful were I not ſenſible of his kindneſs yeſterday, and very blind if his merits had eſcaped me. His figure is ſo graceful, ſo noble! His manners ſo gentle, yet ſo manly! I never yet ſaw ſo many accompliſhments united in one perſon, and I doubt whether Madrid can produce his equal."

"Why then were you ſo ſilent in praiſe of this phœnix of Madrid? Why was it concealed from me, that his ſociety had afforded you pleaſure?"

"In truth, I know not: you aſk me a queſtion which I cannot reſolve myſelf. I was on the point of mentioning him a thouſand times; his name was conſtantly on my lips; but when I would have pronounced it, I wanted courage to execute my deſign.

However, if I did not ſpeak of him, it was not that I thought of him the leſs."

"That I believe. But ſhall I tell you why you wanted courage? It was becauſe, accuſtomed to confide to me your moſt ſecret thoughts, you knew not how to conceal, yet feared to acknowledge, that your heart nouriſhed a ſentiment which you were conſcious I ſhould diſapprove. Come hither to me, my child."

Antonia quitted her embroidery frame, threw herſelf upon her knees by the ſopha, and hid her face in her mother's lap.

"Fear not, my ſweet girl! Conſider me equally as your friend and parent, and apprehend no reproof from me. I have read the emotions of your boſom; you are yet ill ſkilled in concealing them, and they could not eſcape my attentive eye. This Lorenzo is dangerous to your repoſe; he has already made an impreſſion upon your heart. 'Tis true that I perceive eaſily that your affection is returned: but what can be

the conſequences of this attachment? You are poor and friendleſs, my Antonia; Lorenzo is the heir of the duke of Medina Celi. Even ſhould himſelf mean honourably, his uncle never will conſent to your union; nor, without that uncle's conſent, will I. By ſad experience I know what ſorrow ſhe muſt endure, who marries into a family unwilling to receive her. Then ſtruggle with your affection: whatever pains it may coſt you, ſtrive to conquer it. Your heart is tender and ſuſceptible: it has already received a ſtrong impreſſion; but when once convinced that you ſhould not encourage ſuch ſentiments, I truſt that you have ſufficient fortitude to drive them from your boſom."

Antonia kiſſed her hand, and promiſed implicit obedience. Elvira then continued——

"To prevent your paſſion from growing ſtronger, it will be needful to prohibit Lorenzo's viſits. The ſervice which he has rendered me permits not my forbidding

them positively; but unless I judge too favourably of his character, he will discontinue them without taking offence, if I confess to him my reasons, and throw myself entirely on his generosity. The next time that I see him, I will honestly avow to him the embarrassment which his presence occasions. How say you, my child? Is not this measure necessary?"

Antonia subscribed to every thing without hesitation, though not without regret. Her mother kissed her affectionately, and retired to bed. Antonia followed her example, and vowed so frequently never more to think of Lorenzo, that till sleep closed her eyes she thought of nothing else.

While this was passing at Elvira's, Lorenzo hastened to rejoin the marquis. Every thing was ready for the second elopement of Agnes; and at twelve the two friends with a coach and four were at the garden-wall of the convent. Don Raymond drew out his key, and unlocked the door.

door. They entered, and waited for ſome time in expectation of being joined by Agnes. At length the marquis grew impatient: beginning to fear that his ſecond attempt would ſucceed no better than the firſt, he propoſed to reconnoitre the convent. The friends advanced towards it. Every thing was ſtill and dark. The prioreſs was anxious to keep the ſtory a ſecret, fearing leſt the crime of one of its members ſhould bring diſgrace upon the whole community, or that the interpoſition of powerful relations ſhould deprive her vengeance of its intended victim. She took care therefore to give the lover of Agnes no cauſe to ſuppoſe that his deſign was diſcovered, and his miſtreſs on the point of ſuffering the puniſhment of her fault. The ſame reaſon made her reject the idea of arreſting the unknown ſeducer in the garden: ſuch a proceeding would have created much diſturbance, and the diſgrace of her convent would have been noiſed about Madrid. She contented herſelf with confining Agnes cloſely: as to the

lover, ſhe left him at liberty to purſue his deſigns. What ſhe had expected was the reſult. The marquis and Lorenzo waited in vain till the break of day; they then retired without noiſe, alarmed at the failure of their plan, and ignorant of the cauſe of its ill ſucceſs.

The next morning Lorenzo went to the convent, and requeſted to ſee his ſiſter. The prioreſs appeared at the grate with a melancholy countenance. She informed him that for ſeveral days Agnes had appeared much agitated; that ſhe had been preſſed by the nuns in vain to reveal the cauſe, and apply to their tenderneſs for advice and conſolation; that ſhe had obſtinately perſiſted in concealing the cauſe of her diſtreſs; but that on Thurſday evening it had produced ſo violent an effect upon her conſtitution, that ſhe had fallen ill, and was actually confined to her bed. Lorenzo did not credit a ſyllable of this account: he inſiſted upon ſeeing his ſiſter; if ſhe was unable to come to the grate, he deſired to

be

be admitted to her cell. The prioreſs croſſed herſelf! ſhe was ſhocked at the very idea of a man's profane eye pervading the nterior of her holy manſion, and profeſſed herſelf aſtoniſhed that Lorenzo could think of ſuch a thing. She told him that his requeſt could not be granted; but that, if he returned the next day, ſhe hoped that her beloved daughter would then be ſufficiently recovered to join him at the parlour grate. With this anſwer Lorenzo was obliged to retire, unſatisfied, and trembling for his ſiſter's ſafety.

He returned the next morning at an early hour. "Agnes was worſe; the phyſician had pronounced her to be in imminent danger; ſhe was ordered to remain quiet, and it was utterly impoſſible for her to receive her brother's viſit." Lorenzo ſtormed at this anſwer, but there was no reſource. He raved, he entreated, he threatened; no means were left untried to obtain a ſight of Agnes. His endeavours were as fruitleſs as thoſe of the day before, and he returned in

deſpair to the marquis. On his ſide, the latter had ſpared no pains to diſcover what had occaſioned his plot to fail. Don Chriſtoval, to whom the affair was now entruſted, endeavoured to worm out the ſecret from the old portereſs of St. Clare, with whom he had formed an acquaintance; but ſhe was too much upon her guard, and he gained from her no intelligence. The marquis was almoſt diſtracted, and Lorenzo felt ſcarcely leſs inquietude. Both were convinced that the purpoſed elopement muſt have been diſcovered: they doubted not but the malady of Agnes was a pretence, but they knew not by what means to reſcue her from the hands of the prioreſs.

Regularly every day did Lorenzo viſit the convent: as regularly was he informed that his ſiſter rather grew worſe than better. Certain that her indiſpoſition was feigned, theſe accounts did not alarm him: but his ignorance of her fate, and of the motives which induced the prioreſs to keep her

her from him, excited the moſt ſerious uneaſineſs. He was ſtill uncertain what ſteps he ought to take, when the marquis received a letter from the cardinal-duke of Lerma. It incloſed the pope's expected bull, ordering that Agnes ſhould be releaſed from her vows, and reſtored to her relations. This eſſential paper decided at once the proceedings of her friends; they reſolved that Lorenzo ſhould carry it to the domina without delay, and demand that his ſiſter ſhould be inſtantly given up to him. Againſt this mandate illneſs could not be pleaded: it gave her brother the power of removing her inſtantly to the palace de Medina, and he determined to uſe that power on the following day.

His mind relieved from inquietude reſpecting his ſiſter, and his ſpirits raiſed by the hope of ſoon reſtoring her to freedom, he now had time to give a few moments to love and to Antonia. At the ſame hour as on his former viſit, he repaired to Donna Elvira's. She had given orders for his ad-

miſſion. As ſoon as he was announced, her daughter retired with Leonella; and when he entered the chamber, he found the lady of the houſe alone. She received him with leſs diſtance than before, and deſired him to place himſelf near her upon the ſopha. She then, without loſing time, opened her buſineſs, as had been agreed between herſelf and Antonia.

"You muſt not think me ungrateful, Don Lorenzo, or forgetful how eſſential are the ſervices which you have rendered me with the marquis. I feel the weight of my obligations: nothing under the ſun ſhould induce my taking the ſtep to which I am now compelled, but the intereſt of my child, of my beloved Antonia. My health is declining; God only knows how ſoon I may be ſummoned before his throne. My daughter will be left without parents, and, ſhould ſhe loſe the protection of the Ciſternas family, without friends. She is young and artleſs, uninſtructed in the world's perfidy, and with charms ſufficient to render her

her an object of ſeduction. Judge then how I muſt tremble at the proſpect before her! Judge, how anxious I muſt be to keep her from their ſociety who may excite the yet dormant paſſions of her boſom. You are amiable, Don Lorenzo; Antonia has a ſuſceptible, a loving heart, and is grateful for the favours conferred upon us by your interference with the marquis. Your preſence makes me tremble: I fear leſt it ſhould inſpire her with ſentiments which may embitter the remainder of her life, or encourage her to cheriſh hopes in her ſituation unjuſtifiable and futile. Pardon me, when I avow my terrors, and let my frankneſs plead in my excuſe. I cannot forbid you my houſe, for gratitude reſtrains me; I can only throw myſelf upon your generoſity, and entreat you to ſpare the feelings of an anxious, of a doting mother. Believe me when I aſſure you, that I lament the neceſſity of rejecting your acquaintance; but there is no remedy, and Antonia's intereſt obliges me to beg you to forbear your

viſits. By complying with my requeſt you, will increaſe the eſteem which I already feel for you, and of which every thing convinces me that you are truly deſerving."

"Your frankneſs charms me," replied Lorenzo: "You ſhall find, that in your favourable opinion of me you were not deceived; yet I hope that the reaſons now in my power to allege, will perſuade you to withdraw a requeſt which I cannot obey without infinite reluctance. I love your daughter, love her moſt ſincerely; I wiſh for no greater happineſs than to inſpire her with the ſame ſentiments, and receive her hand at the altar as her huſband. 'Tis true I am not rich myſelf, my father's death has left me but little in my own poſſeſſion; but my expectations juſtify my pretending to the Condé de las Ciſternas' daughter."

He was proceeding, but Elvira interrupted him——

"Ah! Don Lorenzo, you forget in that pompous title the meanneſs of my origin.

You forget that I have now paſſed fourteen years in Spain, diſavowed by my huſband's family, and exiſting upon a ſtipend barely ſufficient for the ſupport and education of my daughter. Nay, I have even been neglected by moſt of my own relations, who out of envy affect to doubt the reality of my marriage. My allowance being diſcontinued at my father-in-law's death, I was reduced to the very brink of want. In this ſituation I was found by my ſiſter, who, amongſt all her foibles, poſſeſſes a warm, generous, and affectionate heart. She aided me with the little fortune which my father left her, perſuaded me to viſit Madrid, and has ſupported my child and myſelf ſince our quitting Murcia. Then, conſider not Antonia as deſcended from the Condé de las Ciſternas; conſider her as a poor and unprotected orphan, as the grand-child of the tradeſman Torribio Dalfa, as the needy penſioner of that tradeſman's daughter. Reflect upon the difference between ſuch a ſituation and that of the nephew and heir of the potent

duke

duke of Medina. I believe your intentions to be honourable; but as there are no hopes that your uncle will approve of the union, I foreſee that the conſequences of your attachment muſt be fatal to my child's repoſe."

"Pardon me, Segnora; you are miſinformed if you ſuppoſe the duke of Medina to reſemble the generality of men. His ſentiments are liberal and diſintereſted; he loves me well, and I have no reaſon to dread his forbidding the marriage, when he perceives that my happineſs depends upon Antonia. But ſuppoſing him to refuſe his ſanction, what have I ſtill to fear? My parents are no more; my little fortune is in my own poſſeſſion; it will be ſufficient to ſupport Antonia, and I ſhall exchange for her hand Medina's dukedom without one ſigh of regret."

"You are young and eager; it is natural for you to entertain ſuch ideas. But experience has taught me to my coſt, that curſes accompany an unequal alliance. I married

the

the Condé de las Ciſternas in oppoſition to the will of his relations; many an heart-pang has puniſhed me for the imprudent ſtep. Wherever we bent our courſe, a father's execration purſued Gonzalvo. Poverty overtook us, and no friend was near to relieve our wants. Still our mutual affection exiſted, but, alas! not without interruption. Accuſtomed to wealth and eaſe, ill could my huſband ſupport the tranſition to diſtreſs and indigence. He looked back with repining to the comforts which he once enjoyed. He regretted the ſituation which for my ſake he had quitted; and, in moments when deſpair poſſeſſed his mind, has reproached me with having made him the companion of want and wretchedneſs. He has called me his bane! the ſource of his ſorrows, the cauſe of his deſtruction! Ah! God! he little knew how much keener were my own heart's reproaches! He was ignorant that I ſuffered trebly, for myſelf, for my children, and for him! 'Tis true that his

his anger ſeldom laſted long: his ſincere affection for me ſoon revived in his heart, and then his repentance for the tears which he had made me ſhed, tortured me even more than his reproaches. He would throw himſelf on the ground, implore my forgiveneſs in the moſt frantic terms, and load himſelf with curſes for being the murderer of my repoſe. Taught by experience, that an union contracted againſt the inclinations of families on either ſide muſt be unfortunate, I will ſave my daughter from thoſe miſeries which I have ſuffered. Without your uncle's conſent, while I live, ſhe never ſhall be yours. Undoubtedly he will diſapprove of the union; his power is immenſe, and Antonia ſhall not be expoſed to his anger and perſecution."

"His perſecution? How eaſily may that be avoided! Let the worſt happen, it is but quitting Spain. My wealth may eaſily be realiſed. The Indian iſlands will offer us a ſecure retreat. I have an eſtate, though not

not of value, in Hiſpaniola: thither will we fly, and I ſhall conſider it to be my native country, if it gives me Antonia's undiſturbed poſſeſſion."

"Ah! youth, this is a fond, romantic viſion. Gonzalvo thought the ſame. He fancied that he could leave Spain without regret; but the moment of parting undeceived him. You know not yet what it is to quit your native land: to quit it, never to behold it more! You know not what it is to exchange the ſcenes where you have paſſed your infancy, for unknown realms and barbarous climates!—to be forgotten, utterly, eternally forgotten by the companions of your youth!—to ſee your deareſt friends, the fondeſt objects of your affection, periſhing with diſeaſes incidental to Indian atmoſpheres, and find yourſelf unable to procure for them neceſſary aſſiſtance! I have felt all this! My huſband and two ſweet babes found their graves in Cuba: nothing would have ſaved my young Antonia, but my ſudden return to Spain. Ah!

Don

Don Lorenzo, could you conceive what I ſuffered during my abſence! Could you know how ſorely I regretted all that I left behind, and how dear to me was the very name of Spain! I envied the winds which blew towards it: and when the Spaniſh ſailor chaunted ſome well-known air as he paſſed my window, tears filled my eyes, while I thought upon my native land. Gonzalvo too——my huſband——"

Elvira pauſed. Her voice faltered, and ſhe concealed her face with her handkerchief. After a ſhort ſilence ſhe roſe from the ſopha, and proceeded——

"Excuſe my quitting you for a few moments; the remembrance of what I have ſuffered has much agitated me, and I need to be alone. Till I return, peruſe theſe lines. After my huſband's death I found them among his papers. Had I known ſooner that he entertained ſuch ſentiments, grief would have killed me. He wrote theſe verſes on his voyage to Cuba, when his mind was clouded by ſorrow, and he forgot that

he

he had a wife and children. What we are losing ever seems to us the most precious. Gonzalvo was quitting Spain for ever, and therefore was Spain dearer to his eyes than all else which the world contained. Read them Don Lorenzo, they will give you some idea of the feelings of a banished man."

Elvira put a paper into Lorenzo's hand, and retired from the chamber. The youth examined the contents, and found them to be as follows:

THE EXILE.

FAREWELL, oh native Spain! farewell for ever!
These banished eyes shall view thy coasts no more:
A mournful presage tells my heart, that never
Gonzalvo's steps again shall press thy shore.

Hushed are the winds; while soft the vessel sailing
With gentle motion plows the unruffled main,
I feel my bosom's boasted courage failing,
And curse the waves which bear me far from Spain.

I see it yet! Beneath yon blue clear heaven
Still do the spires, so well-beloved, appear.
From yonder craggy point the gale of even
Still wafts my native accents to mine ear.

Propped

Propped on ſome moſs-crowned rock, and gaily ſinging,
There in the ſun his nets the fiſher dries;
Oft have I heard the plaintive ballad, bringing
Scenes of paſt joys before my ſorrowing eyes.

Ah! happy ſwain! he waits the accuſtomed hour,
When twilight-gloom obſcures the cloſing ſky;
Then gladly ſeeks his loved paternal bower,
And ſhares the feaſt his native fields ſupply.

Friendſhip and Love, his cottage gueſts, receive him
With honeſt welcome and with ſmile ſincere:
No threatening woes of preſent joys bereave him;
No ſigh his boſom owns, his cheek no tear.

Ah! happy ſwain! ſuch bliſs to me denying,
Fortune thy lot with envy bids me view;
Me, who, from home and Spain an exile flying,
Bid all I value, all I love, adieu.

No more mine ear ſhall liſt the well-known ditty
Sung by ſome mountain-girl, who tends her goats,
Some village-ſwain imploring amorous pity,
Or ſhepherd chanting wild his ruſtic notes.

No more my arms a parent's fond embraces,
No more my heart domeſtic calm muſt know;
Far from theſe joys, with ſighs which memory traces,
To ſultry ſkies and diſtant climes I go.

Where Indian ſuns engender new diſeaſes,
Where ſnakes and tigers breed, I bend my way,

To

To brave the feveriſh thirſt no art appeales,
The yellow plague, and madding blaze of day.

But not to feel ſlow pangs conſume my liver,
To die by piece-meal in the bloom of age,
My boiling blood drank by inſatiate fever,
And brain delirious with the day-ſtar's rage,

Can make me know ſuch grief, as thus to ſever,
With many a bitter ſigh, dear land! from thee;
To feel this heart muſt dote on thee for ever,
And feel that all thy joys are torn from me!

Ah me! how oft will fancy's ſpells, in ſlumber,
Recall my native country to my mind!
How oft regret will bid me ſadly number
Each loſt delight, and dear friend left behind!

Wild Murcia's vales and loved romantic bowers,
The river on whoſe banks a child I played,
My caſtle's antient halls, its frowning towers,
Each much-regretted wood, and well-known glade;

Dreams of the land where all my wiſhes centre,
Thy ſcenes, which I am doomed no more to know,
Full oft ſhall memory trace, my ſoul's tormentor,
And turn each pleaſure paſt to preſent woe.

But, lo! the ſun beneath the waves retires;
Night ſpeeds apace her empire to reſtore!

Clouds

Clouds from my ſight obſcure the village-ſpires,
Now ſeen but faintly, and now ſeen no more.

Oh! breathe not, winds? Still be the water's motion!
Sleep, ſleep, my bark, in ſilence on the main!
So, when to-morrow's light ſhall gild the ocean,
Once more mine eyes ſhall ſee the coaſt of Spain.

Vain is the wiſh! My laſt petition ſcorning,
Freſh blows the gale, and high the billows ſwell:
Far ſhall we be before the break of morning:
Oh! then, for ever, native Spain, farewell!

Lorenzo had ſcarcely time to read theſe lines, when Elvira returned to him: the giving a free courſe to her tears had relieved her, and her ſpirits had regained their uſual compoſure.

"I have nothing more to ſay, my lord," ſaid ſhe; "you have heard my apprehenſions, and my reaſons for begging you not to repeat your viſits. I have thrown myſelf in full confidence upon your honour. I am certain that you will not prove my opinion of you to have been too favourable."

"But one queſtion more, Segnora, and I leave you. Should the duke of Medina

approve

approve my love, would my addreſſes be unacceptable to yourſelf and the fair Antonia?"

"I will be open with you, Don Lorenzo: there being little probability of ſuch an union taking place, I fear that it is deſired but too ardently by my daughter. You have made an impreſſion upon her young heart which gives me the moſt ſerious alarm: to prevent that impreſſion from growing ſtronger, I am obliged to decline your acquaintance. For me, you may be ſure that I ſhould rejoice at eſtabliſhing my child ſo advantageouſly. Conſcious that my conſtitution, impaired by grief and illneſs, forbids me to expect a long continuance in this world, I tremble at the thought of leaving her under the protection of a perfect ſtranger. The marquis de las Ciſternas is totally unknown to me. He will marry: his lady may look upon Antonia with an eye of diſpleaſure, and deprive her of her only friend. Should the duke, your uncle, give his con-

ſent, you need not doubt obtaining mine and my daughter's; but, without his, hope not for ours. At all events, whatever ſteps you may take, whatever may be the duke's deciſion, till you know it, let me beg your forbearing to ſtrengthen, by your preſence, Antonia's prepoſſeſſion. If the ſanction of your relations authoriſes your addreſſing her as your wife, my doors fly open to you. If that ſanction is refuſed, be ſatisfied to poſſeſs my eſteem and gratitude, but remember that we muſt meet no more."

Lorenzo promiſed reluctantly to conform to this decree: but he added, that he hoped ſoon to obtain that conſent, which would give him a claim to the renewal of their acquaintance. He then explained to her why the marquis had not called in perſon; and made no ſcruple of confiding to her his ſiſter's hiſtory. He concluded by ſaying, "that he hoped to ſet Agnes at liberty the next day; and that, as ſoon as Don Raymond's fears were quieted upon this ſubject,

he

he would loſe no time in aſſuring Donna Elvira of his friendſhip and protection."

The lady ſhook her head.

"I tremble for your ſiſter," ſaid ſhe; "I have heard many traits of the domina of St. Clare's character from a friend who was educated in the ſame convent with her: ſhe reported her to be haughty, inflexible, ſuperſtitious, and revengeful. I have ſince heard, that ſhe is infatuated with the idea of rendering her convent the moſt regular in Madrid, and never forgave thoſe whoſe imprudence threw upon it the ſlighteſt ſtain. Though naturally violent and ſevere, when her intereſts require it, ſhe well knows how to aſſume an appearance of benignity. She leaves no means untried to perſuade young women of rank to become members of her community: ſhe is implacable when once incenſed, and has too much intrepidity to ſhrink at taking the moſt rigorous meaſures for puniſhing the offender. Doubtleſs, ſhe will conſider your ſiſter's quitting the con-

vent as a disgrace thrown upon it: she will use every artifice to avoid obeying the mandate of his holiness; and I shudder to think that Donna Agnes is in the hands of this dangerous woman."

Lorenzo now rose to take leave. Elvira gave him her hand at parting, which he kissed respectfully; and, telling her that he soon hoped for the permission to salute that of Antonia, he returned to his hotel. The lady was perfectly satisfied with the conversation which had passed between them: she looked forward with satisfaction to the prospect of his becoming her son-in-law; but prudence bade her conceal from her daughter's knowledge the flattering hopes which herself now ventured to entertain.

Scarcely was it day, and already Lorenzo was at the convent of St. Clare, furnished with the necessary mandate. The nuns were at matins. He waited impatiently for the conclusion of the service; and at length the prioress appeared at the parlour-grate. Agnes

nes was demanded. The old lady replied with a melancholy air, that the dear child's ſituation grew hourly more dangerous: that the phyſicians deſpaired of her life; but that they had declared the only chance for her recovery to conſiſt in keeping her quiet, and not to permit thoſe to approach her whoſe preſence was likely to agitate her. Not a word of all this was believed by Lorenzo, any more than he credited the expreſſions of grief and affection for Agnes with which this account was interlarded. To end the buſineſs, he put the pope's bull into the hands of the domina, and inſiſted that, ill or in health, his ſiſter ſhould be delivered to him without delay.

The prioreſs received the paper with an air of humility; but no ſooner had her eye glanced over the contents than her reſentment baffled all the efforts of hypocriſy. A deep crimſon ſpread itſelf over her face, and ſhe darted upon Lorenzo looks of rage and menace.

"This order is poſitive," ſaid ſhe, in a

voice of anger, which ſhe in vain ſtrove to diſguiſe: "willingly would I obey it, but, unfortunately, it is out of my power."

Lorenzo interrupted her by an exclamation of ſurpriſe.

"I repeat it, Segnor, to obey this order is totally out of my power. From tenderneſs to a brother's feelings, I would have communicated the ſad event to you by degrees, and have prepared you to hear it with fortitude. My meaſures are broken through: this order commands me to deliver up to you the ſiſter Agnes without delay; I am, therefore, obliged to inform you, without circumlocution, that on Friday laſt ſhe expired."

Lorenzo ſtarted back with horror, and turned pale. A moment's recollection convinced him that this aſſertion muſt be falſe, and it reſtored him to himſelf.

"You deceive me!" ſaid he, paſſionately: "but five minutes paſt you aſſured me that, though ill, ſhe was ſtill alive. Produce her this inſtant! See her I muſt and will;

will; and every attempt to keep her from me will be unavailing."

"You forget yourſelf, Segnor: you owe reſpect to my age as well as my profeſſion. Your ſiſter is no more. If I at firſt concealed her death, it was from dreading leſt an event ſo unexpected ſhould produce on you too violent an effect. In truth, I am but ill repaid for my attention. And what intereſt, I pray you, ſhould I have in detaining her? To know her wiſh of quitting our ſociety is a ſufficient reaſon for me to wiſh her abſence, and think her a diſgrace to the ſiſterhood of St. Clare: but ſhe has forfeited my affection in a manner yet more culpable. Her crimes were great; and when you know the cauſe of her death, you will doubtleſs rejoice, Don Lorenzo, that ſuch a wretch is no longer in exiſtence. She was taken ill on Thurſday laſt on returning from confeſſion in the Capuchin chapel: her malady ſeemed attended with ſtrange circumſtances; but ſhe perſiſted in concealing its cauſe. Thanks to the Virgin,

we were too ignorant to ſuſpect it! Judge then what muſt have been our conſternation, our horror, when ſhe was delivered the next day of a ſtill-born child, whom ſhe immediately followed to the grave. How, Segnor? Is it poſſible that your countenance expreſſes no ſurpriſe, no indignation? Is it poſſible that your ſiſter's infamy was known to you, and that ſtill ſhe poſſeſſed your affection? In that caſe, you have no need of my compaſſion. I can ſay nothing more, except repeat my inability of obeying the orders of his holineſs. Agnes is no more; and, to convince you that what I ſay is true, I ſwear by our bleſſed Saviour, that three days have paſſed ſince ſhe was buried."

[Here ſhe kiſſed a ſmall crucifix which hung at her girdle: ſhe then roſe from her chair, and quitted the parlour. As ſhe withdrew ſhe caſt upon Lorenzo a ſcornful ſmile.

"Farewell, Segnor," ſaid ſhe; "I know no remedy for this accident. I fear that even a ſecond bull from the pope will not procure your ſiſter's reſurrection."

Lorenzo

Lorenzo alſo retired, penetrated with affliction: but Don Raymond's, at the news of this event, amounted to madneſs: he would not be convinced that Agnes was really dead; and continued to inſiſt that the walls of St. Clare ſtill confined her. No arguments could make him abandon his hopes of regaining her. Every day ſome freſh ſcheme was invented for procuring intelligence of her, and all of them were attended with the ſame ſucceſs.

On his part, Medina gave up the idea of ever ſeeing his ſiſter more; yet he believed that ſhe had been taken off by unfair means. Under this perſuaſion, he encouraged Don Raymond's reſearches, determined, ſhould he diſcover the leaſt warrant for his ſuſpicions, to take a ſevere vengeance upon the unfeeling prioreſs. The loſs of his ſiſter affected him ſincerely: nor was it the leaſt cauſe of his diſtreſs, that propriety obliged him for ſome time to defer mentioning Antonia to the duke. In the mean while, his emiſſaries conſtantly ſurrounded Elvira's

door. He had intelligence of all the movements of his miſtreſs. As ſhe never failed every Thurſday to attend the ſermon in the Capuchin cathedral, he was ſecure of ſeeing her once a week; though, in compliance with his promiſe, he carefully ſhunned her obſervation. Thus two long months paſſed away. Still no information was procured of Agnes. All but the marquis credited her death: and now Lorenzo determined to diſcloſe his ſentiments to his uncle: he had already dropped ſome hints of his intention to marry: they had been as favourably received as he could expect; and he harboured no doubt of the ſucceſs of his application.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

While in each other's arms entranced they lay,
They bleſſed the night, and curſed the coming day.
LEE.

THE burſt of tranſport was paſſed: Ambroſio's luſt was ſatisfied. Pleaſure fled, and Shame uſurped her ſeat in his boſom. Confuſed and terrified at his weakneſs, he drew himſelf from Matilda's arms: his perjury preſented itſelf before him: he reflected on the ſcene which had juſt been acted, and trembled at the conſequences of a diſcovery: he looked forward with horror: his heart was deſpondent, and became the abode of ſatiety and diſguſt: he avoided the eyes of his partner in frailty. A melancholy ſilence prevailed, during which both ſeemed buſied with diſagreeable reflections.

Matilda was the firſt to break it. She took his hand gently, and preſſed it to her burning lips.

"Ambroſio!" ſhe murmured, in a ſoft and trembling voice.

The abbot ſtarted at the ſound: he turned his eyes upon Matilda's; they were filled with tears; her cheeks were covered with bluſhes, and her ſupplicating looks ſeemed to ſolicit his compaſſion.

"Dangerous woman!" ſaid he; "into what an abyſs of miſery have you plunged me! Should your ſex be diſcovered, my honour, nay, my life, muſt pay for the pleaſure of a few moments. Fool that I was, to truſt myſelf to your ſeductions! What can now be done? How can my offence be expiated? What atonement can purchaſe the pardon of my crime? Wretched Matilda, you have deſtroyed my quiet for ever!"

"To me theſe reproaches, Ambroſio? to me, who have ſacrificed for you the world's pleaſures, the luxury of wealth, the

delicacy

delicacy of ſex, my friends, my fortune, and my fame? What have you loſt which I preſerved? Have *I* not ſhared in *your* guilt? Have *you* not ſhared in *my* pleaſure? Guilt, did I ſay? In what conſiſts ours, unleſs in the opinion of an ill-judging world? Let that world be ignorant of them, and our joys become divine and blameleſs! Unnatural were your vows of celibacy; man was not created for ſuch a ſtate: and were love a crime, God never would have made it ſo ſweet, ſo irreſiſtible! Then baniſh thoſe clouds from your brow, my Ambroſio. Indulge in thoſe pleaſures freely, without which life is a worthleſs gift. Ceaſe to reproach me with having taught you what is bliſs, and feel equal tranſports with the woman who adores you!"

As ſhe ſpoke, her eyes were filled with a delicious languor: her boſom panted: ſhe twined her arms voluptuouſly round him, drew him towards her, and glued her lips to his. Ambroſio again raged with deſire: the die was thrown: his vows were already broken:

broken: he had already committed the crime, and why ſhould he refrain from enjoying its reward? He claſped her to his breaſt with redoubled ardour. No longer repreſſed by the ſenſe of ſhame, he gave a looſe to his intemperate appetites; while the fair wanton put every invention of luſt in practice, every refinement in the art of pleaſure, which might heighten the bliſs of her poſſeſſion, and render her lover's tranſports ſtill more exquiſite. Ambroſio rioted in delights till then unknown to him. Swift fled the night, and the morning bluſhed to behold him ſtill claſped in the embraces of Matilda.

Intoxicated with pleaſure, the monk roſe from the ſyren's luxurious couch: he no longer reflected with ſhame upon his incontinence, or dreaded the vengeance of offended heaven: his only fear was leſt death ſhould rob him of enjoyments, for which his long faſt had only given a keener edge to his appetite. Matilda was ſtill under the influence of poiſon; and the voluptuous monk trembled leſs for his preſerver's life than his

concubine's.

concubine's. Deprived of her, he would not eaſily find another miſtreſs with whom he could indulge his paſſions ſo fully, and ſo ſafely; he therefore preſſed her with earneſtneſs to uſe the means of preſervation which ſhe had declared to be in her poſſeſſion.

"Yes!" replied Matilda; "ſince you have made me feel that life is valuable, I will reſcue mine at any rate. No dangers ſhall appal me: I will look upon the conſequences of my action boldly, nor ſhudder at the horrors which they preſent: I will think my ſacrifice ſcarcely worthy to purchaſe your poſſeſſion; and remember, that a moment paſſed in your arms in this world, o'erpays an age of puniſhment in the next. But before I take this ſtep, Ambroſio, give me your ſolemn oath never to enquire by what means I ſhall preſerve myſelf."

He did ſo, in a manner the moſt binding.

"I thank you, my beloved. This precaution is neceſſary; for, though you know

it

it not, you are under the command of vulgar prejudices. The buſineſs on which I muſt be employed this night might ſtartle you, from its ſingularity, and lower me in your opinion. Tell me, are you poſſeſſed of the key of the low door on the weſtern ſide of the garden?"

"The door which opens into the burying-ground common to us and the ſiſterhood of St. Clare? I have not the key, but can eaſily procure it."

"You have only this to do. Admit me into the burying-ground at midnight. Watch while I deſcend into the vaults of St. Clare, leſt ſome prying eye ſhould obſerve my actions. Leave me there alone for an hour, and that life is ſafe which I dedicate to your pleaſures. To prevent creating ſuſpicion, do not viſit me during the day. Remember the key, and that I expect you before twelve. Hark! I hear ſteps approaching! Leave me; I will pretend to ſleep."

The friar obeyed, and left the cell. As he

he opened the door, father Pablos made his appearance.

"I come," ſaid the latter, "to enquire after the health of my young patient."

"Huſh!" replied Ambroſio, laying his finger upon his lip; "ſpeak ſoftly; I am juſt come from him: he has fallen into a profound ſlumber, which doubtleſs will be of ſervice to him. Do not diſturb him at preſent, for he wiſhes to repoſe."

Father Pablos obeyed, and, hearing the bell ring, accompanied the abbot to matins. Ambroſio felt embarraſſed as he entered the chapel. Guilt was new to him, and he fancied that every eye could read the tranſactions of the night upon his countenance. He ſtrove to pray: his boſom no longer glowed with devotion: his thoughts inſenſibly wandered to Matilda's ſecret charms. But what he wanted in purity of heart, he ſupplied by exterior ſanctity. The better to cloak his tranſgreſſion, he redoubled his pretenſions to the ſemb ance of virtue, and never appeared more devoted to heaven

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than ſince he had broken through his engagements. Thus did he unconſciouſly add hypocriſy to perjury and incontinence: he had fallen into the latter errors from yielding to ſeduction almoſt irreſiſtible: but he was now guilty of a voluntary fault, by endeavouring to conceal thoſe into which another had betrayed him.

The matins concluded, Ambroſio retired to his cell. The pleaſures which he had juſt taſted for the firſt time were ſtill impreſſed upon his mind: his brain was bewildered, and preſented a confuſed chaos of remorſe, voluptuouſneſs, inquietude, and fear: he looked back with regret to that peace of ſoul, that ſecurity of virtue, which till then had been his portion: he had indulged in exceſſes whoſe very idea, but four-and-twenty hours before, he had recoiled at with horror: he ſhuddered at reflecting that a trifling indiſcretion on his part, or on Matilda's, would overturn that fabric of reputation which it had coſt him thirty years to erect, and render him the abhorrence of that

people

people of whom he was then the idol. Conſcience painted to him in glaring colours his perjury and weakneſs; apprehenſion magnified to him the horrors of puniſhment, and he already fancied himſelf in the priſons of the Inquiſition. To theſe tormenting ideas ſucceeded Matilda's beauty, and thoſe delicious leſſons, which once learnt can never be forgotten. A ſingle glance thrown upon theſe reconciled him with himſelf: he conſidered the pleaſures of the former night to have been purchaſed at an eaſy price by the ſacrifice of innocence and honour. Their very remembrance filled his ſoul with ecſtacy: he curſed his fooliſh vanity, which had induced him to waſte in obſcurity the bloom of life, ignorant of the bleſſings of love and woman: he determined, at all events, to continue his commerce with Matilda, and called every argument to his aid which might confirm his reſolution: he aſked himſelf, provided his irregularity was unknown, in what would his fault conſiſt, and what conſequences he had to apprehend?

By

By adhering ſtrictly to every rule of his order ſave chaſtity, he doubted not to retain the eſteem of men, and even the protection of heaven: he truſted eaſily to be forgiven ſo ſlight and natural a deviation from his vows; but he forgot that, having pronounced thoſe vows, incontinence, in laymen the moſt venial of errors, became in his perſon the moſt heinous of crimes.

Once decided upon his future conduct, his mind became more eaſy: he threw himſelf upon his bed, and ſtrove by ſleeping to recruit his ſtrength, exhauſted by his nocturnal exceſſes. He awoke refreſhed, and eager for a repetition of his pleaſures. Obedient to Matilda's order, he viſited not her cell during the day. Father Pablos mentioned in the refectory, that Roſario had at length been prevailed upon to follow his preſcription; but that the medicine had not produced the ſlighteſt effect, and that he believed no mortal ſkill could reſcue him from the grave. With this opinion the abbot agreed, and affected to lament the untimely

fate

fate of a youth whoſe talents had appeared ſo promiſing.

The night arrived. Ambroſio had taken care to procure from the porter the key of the low door opening into the cemetery. Furniſhed with this, when all was ſilent in the monaſtery, he quitted his cell, and haſtened to Matilda's. She had left her bed, and was dreſſed before his arrival.

"I have been expecting you with impatience," ſaid ſhe; "my life depends upon theſe moments. Have you the key?"

"I have."

"Away then to the garden. We have no time to loſe. Follow me!"

She took a ſmall covered baſket from the table. Bearing this in one hand, and the lamp, which was flaming upon the hearth, in the other, ſhe haſtened from the cell. Ambroſio followed her. Both maintained a profound ſilence. She moved on with quick but cautious ſteps, paſſed through the cloiſters, and reached the weſtern ſide of the garden: her eyes flaſhed with a fire and

wildneſs

wildneſs which impreſſed the monk at once with awe and horror. A determined deſperate courage reigned upon her brow: ſhe gave the lamp to Ambroſio; then taking from him the key, ſhe unlocked the low door, and entered the cemetery. It was a vaſt and ſpacious ſquare, planted with yew-trees; half of it belonged to the abbey, the other half was the property of the ſiſterhood of St. Clare, and was protected by a roof of ſtone: the diviſion was marked by an iron railing, the wicket of which was generally left unlocked.

Thither Matilda bent her courſe: ſhe opened the wicket, and ſought for the door leading to the ſubterraneous vaults where repoſed the mouldering bodies of the votaries of St. Clare. The night was perfectly dark; neither moon nor ſtars were viſible. Luckily there was not a breath of wind, and the friar bore his lamp in full ſecurity: by the aſſiſtance of its beams, the door of the ſepulchre was ſoon diſcovered. It was ſunk within the hollow of a wall, and almoſt concealed by

thick feſtoons of ivy hanging over it. Three ſteps of rough-hewn ſtone conducted to it, and Matilda was on the point of deſcending them, when ſhe ſuddenly ſtarted back.

"There are people in the vaults!" ſhe whiſpered to the monk; "conceal yourſelf till they are paſſed."

She took refuge behind a lofty and magnificent tomb, erected in honour of the convent's foundreſs. Ambroſio followed her example, carefully hiding his lamp, leſt its beams ſhould betray them. But a few moments had elapſed when the door was puſhed open leading to the ſubterraneous caverns. Rays of light proceeded up the ſtair-caſe: they enabled the concealed ſpectators to obſerve two females dreſſed in religious habits, who ſeemed engaged in earneſt converſation. The abbot had no difficulty to recognize the prioreſs of St. Clare in the firſt, and one of the elder nuns in her companion.

"Every thing is prepared," ſaid the prioreſs: "her fate ſhall be decided to-morrow; all her tears and ſighs will be unavailing.

No!

No! In five-and-twenty years that I have been ſuperior of this convent, never did I witneſs a tranſaction more infamous!"

"You muſt expect much oppoſition to your will," the other replied in a milder voice: "Agnes has many friends in the convent, and in particular the mother St. Urſula will eſpouſe her cauſe moſt warmly. In truth, ſhe merits to have friends; and I wiſh I could prevail upon you to conſider her youth, and her peculiar ſituation. She ſeems ſenſible of her fault; the exceſs of her grief proves her penitence, and I am convinced that her tears flow more from contrition than fear of puniſhment. Reverend mother, would you be perſuaded to mitigate the ſeverity of your ſentence; would you but deign to overlook this firſt tranſgreſſion; I offer myſelf as the pledge of her future conduct."

"Overlook it, ſay you? Mother Camilla, you amaze me! What? after diſgracing me in the preſence of Madrid's idol, of the very man on whom I moſt wiſhed to im-

preſs

preſs an idea of the ſtrictneſs of my diſcipline? How deſpicable muſt I have appeared to the reverend abbot! No, mother, no! I never can forgive the inſult. I cannot better convince Ambroſio that I abhor ſuch crimes, than by puniſhing that of Agnes with all the rigour of which our ſevere laws admit. Ceaſe then your ſupplications, they will all be unavailing. My reſolution is taken. To-morrow Agnes ſhall be made a terrible example of my juſtice and reſentment."

The mother Camilla ſeemed not to give up the point, but by this time the nuns were out of hearing. The prioreſs unlocked the door which communicated with St. Clare's chapel, and, having entered with her companion, cloſed it again after them.

Matilda now aſked, who was this Agnes with whom the prioreſs was thus incenſed, and what connexion ſhe could have with Ambroſio. He related her adventure; and he added, that ſince that time his ideas having undergone a thorough revolution,

he now felt much compaſſion for the unfortunate nun.

"I deſign," ſaid he, "to requeſt an audience of the domina to-morrow, and uſe every means of obtaining a mitigation of her ſentence."

"Beware of what you do," interrupted Matilda; "your ſudden change of ſentiment may naturally create ſurpriſe, and may give birth to ſuſpicions which it is moſt our intereſt to avoid. Rather redouble your outward auſterity, and thunder out menaces againſt the errors of others, the better to conceal your own. Abandon the nun to her fate. Your interfering might be dangerous, and her imprudence merits to be puniſhed: ſhe is unworthy to enjoy love's pleaſures, who has not wit enough to conceal them. But in diſcuſſing this trifling ſubject I waſte moments which are precious. The night flies apace, and much muſt be done before morning. The nuns are retired, all is ſafe. Give me the lamp, Ambroſio, I muſt deſcend alone into theſe caverns:

caverns: wait here, and if any one approaches warn me by your voice; but as you value your exiſtence, preſume not to follow me: your life would fall a victim to your imprudent curioſity."

Thus ſaying, ſhe advanced towards the ſepulchre, ſtill holding her lamp in one hand, and her little baſket in the other. She touched the door: it turned ſlowly upon its grating hinges, and a narrow winding ſtair-caſe of black marble preſented itſelf to her eyes. She deſcended it; Ambroſio remained above, watching the faint beams of the lamp, as they ſtill receded down the ſtairs. They diſappeared, and he found himſelf in total darkneſs.

Left to himſelf, he could not reflect without ſurpriſe on the ſudden change in Matilda's character and ſentiments. But a few days had paſſed, ſince ſhe appeared the mildeſt and ſofteſt of her ſex, devoted to his will, and looking up to him as to a ſuperior being. Now ſhe aſſumed a ſort of courage and manlineſs in her manners and diſ-

courſe, but ill calculated to pleaſe him. She ſpoke no longer to inſinuate, but command: he found himſelf unable to cope with her in argument, and was unwillingly obliged to confeſs the ſuperiority of her judgment. Every moment convinced him of the aſtoniſhing powers of her mind; but what ſhe gained in the opinion of the man, ſhe loſt with intereſt in the affection of the lover. He regretted Roſario, the fond, the gentle, and ſubmiſſive; he grieved that Matilda preferred the virtues of his ſex to thoſe of her own; and when he thought of her expreſſions reſpecting the devoted nun, he could not help blaming them as cruel and unfeminine. Pity is a ſentiment ſo natural, ſo appropriate to the female character, that it is ſcarcely a merit for a woman to poſſeſs it, but to be without it is a grievous crime. Ambroſio could not eaſily forgive his miſtreſs for being deficient in this amiable quality. However, though he blamed her inſenſibility, he felt the truth of her obſervations; and though he pitied ſincerely

cerely the unfortunate Agnes, he resolved to drop the idea of interposing in her behalf.

Near an hour had elapsed since Matilda descended into the caverns; still she returned not. Ambrosio's curiosity was excited. He drew near the stair-case—he listened—all was silent, except that at intervals he caught the sound of Matilda's voice, as it wound along the subterraneous passages, and was re-echoed by the sepulchre's vaulted roofs. She was at too great a distance for him to distinguish her words, and ere they reached him, they were deadened in a low murmur. He longed to penetrate into this mystery. He resolved to disobey her injunctions, and follow her into the cavern. He advanced to the stair-case; he had already descended some steps, when his courage failed him. He remembered Matilda's menaces if he infringed her orders, and his bosom was filled with a secret unaccountable awe. He returned up the stairs, resumed

his former ſtation, and waited impatiently for the concluſion of this adventure.

Suddenly he was ſenſible of a violent ſhock. An earthquake rocked the ground, the columns which ſupported the roof under which he ſtood, were ſo ſtrongly ſhaken, that every moment menaced him with its fall, and at the ſame moment he heard a loud and tremendous burſt of thunder; it ceaſed, and his eyes being fixed upon the ſtair-caſe, he ſaw a bright column of light flaſh along the caverns beneath. It was ſeen but for an inſtant. No ſooner did it diſappear, than all was once more quiet and obſcure. Profound darkneſs again ſurrounded him, and the ſilence of night was only broken by the whirring bat as ſhe flitted ſlowly by him.

With every inſtant Ambroſio's amazement increaſed. Another hour elapſed, after which the ſame light again appeared, and was loſt again as ſuddenly. It was accompanied by a ſtrain of ſweet but ſolemn muſic,

muſic, which, as it ſtole through the vaults below, inſpired the monk with mingled delight and terror. It had not long been huſhed, when he heard Matilda's ſteps upon the ſtair-caſe. She aſcended from the cavern; the moſt lively joy animated her beautiful features.

"Did you ſee any thing?" ſhe aſked.

"Twice I ſaw a column of light flaſh up the ſtair-caſe."

"Nothing elſe?"

"Nothing.

"The morning is on the point of breaking: let us retire to the abbey, leſt day-light ſhould betray us."

With a light ſtep ſhe haſtened from the burying-ground. She regained her cell, and the curious abbot ſtill accompanied her. She cloſed the door, and diſembarraſſed herſelf of her lamp and baſket.

"I have ſucceeded!" ſhe cried, throwing herſelf upon his boſom; "ſucceeded beyond my fondeſt hopes! I ſhall live, Ambroſio, ſhall live for you! The ſtep, which

I ſhuddered at taking, proves to me a ſource of joys inexpreſſible! Oh! that I dared communicate thoſe joys to you! Oh! that I were permitted to ſhare with you my power, and raiſe you as high above the level of your ſex, as one bold deed has exalted me above mine!"

"And what prevents you, Matilda?" interrupted the friar. "Why is your buſineſs in the cavern made a ſecret?—Do you think me undeſerving of your confidence? Matilda, I muſt doubt the truth of your affection, while you have joys in which I am forbidden to ſhare."

"You reproach me with injuſtice; I grieve ſincerely that I am obliged to conceal from you my happineſs: but I am not to blame; the fault lies not in me, but in yourſelf, my Ambroſio. You are ſtill too much the monk, your mind is enſlaved by the prejudices of education; and ſuperſtition might make you ſhudder at the idea of that which experience has taught me to prize and value. At preſent you are unfit

to

to be truſted with a ſecret of ſuch importance; but the ſtrength of your judgment, and the curioſity which I rejoice to ſee ſparkling in your eyes, make me hope that you will one day deſerve my confidence. Till that period arrives, reſtrain your impatience. Remember that you have given me your ſolemn oath, never to enquire into this night's adventures. I inſiſt upon your keeping this oath; for, though," ſhe added ſmiling, while ſhe ſealed his lips with a wanton kiſs, "though I forgive your breaking your vows to heaven, I expect you to keep your vows to me."

The friar returned the embrace, which had ſet his blood on fire. The luxurious and unbounded exceſſes of the former night were renewed, and they ſeparated not till the bell rang for matins.

The ſame pleaſures were frequently repeated. The monks rejoiced in the feigned Roſario's unexpected recovery, and none of them ſuſpected his real ſex. The

abbot poſſeſſed his miſtreſs in tranquillity, and, perceiving his frailty unſuſpected, abandoned himſelf to his paſſions in full ſecurity. Shame and remorſe no longer tormented him. Frequent repetitions made him familiar with ſin, and his boſom became proof againſt the ſtings of conſcience. In theſe ſentiments he was encouraged by Matilda; but ſhe ſoon was aware that ſhe had ſatiated her lover by the unbounded freedom of her careſſes. Her charms becoming accuſtomed to him, they ceaſed to excite the ſame deſires which at firſt they had inſpired. The delirium of paſſion being paſt, he had leiſure to obſerve every trifling defect; where none were to be found, ſatiety made him fancy them. The monk was glutted with the fullneſs of pleaſure. A week had ſcarcely elapſed, before he was wearied of his paramour: his warm conſtitution ſtill made him ſeek in her arms the gratification of his luſt. But when the moment of paſſion was over, he quitted her with

with diſguſt, and his humour, naturally inconſtant, made him ſigh impatiently for variety.

Poſſeſſion, which cloys man, only increaſes the affection of women. Matilda with every ſucceeding day grew more attached to the friar. Since he had obtained her favours, he was become dearer to her than ever, and ſhe felt grateful to him for the pleaſures in which they had equally been ſharers. Unfortunately, as her paſſion grew ardent, Ambroſio's grew cold; the very marks of her fondneſs excited his diſguſt, and its exceſs ſerved to extinguiſh the flame which already burned but feebly in his boſom. Matilda could not but remark that her ſociety ſeemed to him daily leſs agreeable; he was inattentive while ſhe ſpoke; her muſical talents, which ſhe poſſeſſed in perfection, had loſt the power of amuſing him; or, if he deigned to praiſe them, his compliments were evidently forced and cold. He no longer gazed upon her with affection, or applauded her ſenti-

ments with a lover's partiality. This Matilda well perceived, and redoubled her efforts to revive thoſe ſentiments which he once had felt. She could not but fail, ſince he conſidered as importunities, the pains which ſhe took to pleaſe him, and was diſguſted by the very means which ſhe uſed to recall the wanderer. Still, however, their illicit commerce continued; but it was clear that he was led to her arms, not by love, but the cravings of brutal appetite. His conſtitution made a woman neceſſary to him, and Matilda was the only one with whom he could indulge his paſſions ſafely. In ſpite of her beauty, he gazed upon every other female with more deſire; but fearing that his hypocriſy ſhould be made public, he confined his inclinations to his own breaſt.

It was by no means his nature to be timid: but his education had impreſſed his mind with fear ſo ſtrongly, that apprehenſion was now become part of his character. Had his youth been paſſed in the world, he would have ſhown himſelf poſſeſſed of

many brilliant and manly qualities. He was naturally enterprising, firm, and fearless: he had a warrior's heart, and he might have shone with splendour at the head of an army. There was no want of generosity in his nature: the wretched never failed to find in him a compassionate auditor: his abilities were quick and shining, and his judgment vast, solid, and decisive. With such qualifications he would have been an ornament to his country: that he possessed them he had given proofs in his earliest infancy, and his parents had beheld his dawning virtues with the fondest delight and admiration. Unfortunately, while yet a child, he was deprived of those parents. He fell into the power of a relation, whose only wish about him was never to hear of him more: for that purpose he gave him in charge to his friend, the former superior of the Capuchins. The abbot, a very monk, used all his endeavours to persuade the boy that happiness existed not without the walls of a convent. He succeeded fully. To de-

ſerve admittance into the order of St. Francis was Ambroſio's higheſt ambition. His inſtructors carefully repreſſed thoſe virtues, whoſe grandeur and diſintereſtedneſs were ill ſuited to the cloiſter. Inſtead of univerſal benevolence, he adopted a ſelfiſh partiality for his own particular eſtabliſhment: he was taught to conſider compaſſion for the errors of others as a crime of the blackeſt dye: the noble frankneſs of his temper was exchanged for ſervile humility; and in order to break his natural ſpirit, the monks terrified his young mind, by placing before him all the horrors with which ſuperſtition could furniſh them: they painted to him the torments of the damned in colours the moſt dark, terrible and fantaſtic, and threatened him at the ſlighteſt fault with eternal perdition. No wonder that his imagination conſtantly dwelling upon theſe fearful objects ſhould have rendered his character timid and apprehenſive. Add to this, that his long abſence from the great world, and total unacquaintance with the common dan-

gers of life, made him form of them an idea far more dismal than the reality. While the monks were busied in rooting out his virtues, and narrowing his sentiments, they allowed every vice which had fallen to his share to arrive at full perfection. He was suffered to be proud, vain, ambitious, and disdainful: he was jealous of his equals, and despised all merit but his own: he was implacable when offended, and cruel in his revenge. Still, in spite of the pains taken to pervert them, his natural good qualities would occasionally break through the gloom cast over them so carefully. At such times the contest for superiority between his real and acquired character was striking and unaccountable to those unacquainted with his original disposition. He pronounced the most severe sentences upon offenders, which the moment after compassion induced him to mitigate: he undertook the most daring enterprises, which the fear of their consequences soon obliged him to abandon: his inborn genius darted a brilliant light upon

subjects

ſubjects the moſt obſcure; and almoſt inſtantaneouſly his ſuperſtition replunged them in darkneſs more profound than that from which they had juſt been reſcued. His brother monks, regarding him as a ſuperior being, remarked not this contradiction in their idol's conduct. They were perſuaded that what he did muſt be right, and ſuppoſed him to have good reaſons for changing his reſolutions. The fact was, that the different ſentiments with which education and nature had inſpired him, were combating in his boſom: it remained for his paſſions, which as yet no opportunity had called into play, to decide the victory. Unfortunately his paſſions were the very worſt judges to whom he could poſſibly have applied. His monaſtic ſecluſion had till now been in his favour, ſince it gave him no room for diſcovering his bad qualities. The ſuperiority of his talents raiſed him too far above his companions to permit his being jealous of them: his exemplary piety, perſuaſive eloquence, and

pleaſing

pleaſing manners had ſecured him univerſal eſteem, and conſequently he had no injuries to revenge: his ambition was juſtified by his acknowledged merit, and his pride conſidered as no more than proper confidence. He never ſaw, much leſs converſed with the other ſex: he was ignorant of the pleaſures in woman's power to beſtow; and if he read in the courſe of his ſtudies

"That men were fond, he ſmiled, and wondered how."

For a time ſpare diet, frequent watching, and ſevere penance cooled and repreſſed the natural warmth of his conſtitution: but no ſooner did opportunity preſent itſelf, no ſooner did he catch a glimpſe of joys to which he was ſtill a ſtranger, than religion's barriers were too feeble to reſiſt the overwhelming torrent of his deſires. All impediments yielded before the force of his temperament, warm, ſanguine, and voluptuous in the exceſs. As yet his other paſſions lay dormant; but they only needed to

be

be once awakened, to diſplay themſelves with violence as great and irreſiſtible.

He continued to be the admiration of Madrid. The enthuſiaſm created by his eloquence ſeemed rather to increaſe than diminiſh. Every Thurſday, which was the only day when he appeared in public, the Capuchin cathedral was crowded with auditors, and his diſcourſe was always received with the ſame approbation. He was named confeſſor to all the chief families in Madrid; and no one was counted faſhionable who was injoined penance by any other than Ambroſio. In his reſolution of never ſtirring out of his convent he ſtill perſiſted. This circumſtance created a ſtill greater opinion of his ſanctity and ſelf-denial. Above all, the women ſang forth his praiſes loudly, leſs influenced by devotion than by his noble countenance, majeſtic air, and well-turned graceful figure. The abbey-door was thronged with carriages from morning to night; and the nobleſt and

faireſt

faireſt dames of Madrid confeſſed to the abbot their ſecret peccadilloes. The eyes of the luxurious friar devoured their charms. Had his penitents conſulted theſe interpreters, he would have needed no other means of expreſſing his deſires. For his misfortune, they were ſo ſtrongly perſuaded of his continence, that the poſſibility of his harbouring indecent thoughts never once entered their imaginations. The climate's heat, 'tis well known, operates with no ſmall influence upon the conſtitutions of the Spaniſh ladies: but the moſt abandoned would have thought it an eaſier taſk to inſpire with paſſion the marble ſtatue of St. Francis than the cold and rigid heart of the immaculate Ambroſio.

On his part, the friar was little acquainted with the depravity of the world: he ſuſpected not that but few of his penitents would have rejected his addreſſes. Yet had he been better inſtructed on this head, the danger attending ſuch an attempt would have ſealed up his lips in ſilence. He knew that it

would

would be difficult for a woman to keep a ſecret ſo ſtrange and ſo important as his frailty; and he even trembled, leſt Matilda ſhould betray him. Anxious to preſerve a reputation which was infinitely dear to him, he ſaw all the riſque of committing it to the power of ſome vain giddy female; and as the beauties of Madrid affected only his ſenſes without touching his heart, he forgot them as ſoon as they were out of his ſight. The danger of diſcovery, the fear of being repulſed, the loſs of reputation; all theſe conſiderations counſelled him to ſtifle his deſires; and though he now felt for it the moſt perfect indifference, he was neceſſitated to confine himſelf to Matilda's perſon.

One morning, the confluence of penitents was greater than uſual. He was detained in the confeſſional chair till a late hour. At length the crowd was diſpatched, and he prepared to quit the chapel, when two females entered, and drew near him with humility. They threw up their veils,

and

and the youngeſt entreated him to liſten to her for a few moments. The melody of her voice, of that voice to which no man ever liſtened without intereſt, immediately caught Ambroſio's attention. He ſtopped. The petitioner ſeemed bowed down with affliction: her cheeks were pale, her eyes dimmed with tears, and her hair fell in diſorder over her face and boſom. Still her countenance was ſo ſweet, ſo innocent, ſo heavenly, as might have charmed an heart leſs ſuſceptible than that which panted in the abbot's breaſt. With more than uſual ſoftneſs of manner he deſired her to proceed, and heard her ſpeak as follows, with an emotion which increaſed every moment:

"Reverend father, you ſee an unfortunate threatened with the loſs of her deareſt, of almoſt her only friend! My mother, my excellent mother lies upon the bed of ſickneſs. A ſudden and dreadful malady ſeized her laſt night, and ſo rapid has been its progreſs that the phyſicians deſpair of her life. Human aid fails me; nothing remains

mains for me but to implore the mercy of heaven. Father, all Madrid rings with the report of your piety and virtue. Deign to remember my mother in your prayers: perhaps they may prevail on the Almighty to ſpare her; and ſhould that be the caſe, I engage myſelf every Thurſday in the next three months to illuminate the ſhrine of St. Francis in his honour."

"So!" thought the monk; "here we have a ſecond Vincentio della Ronda. Roſario's adventure began thus;" and he wiſhed ſecretly that this might have the ſame concluſion.

He acceded to the requeſt. The petitioner returned him thanks with every mark of gratitude, and then continued:

"I have yet another favour to aſk. We are ſtrangers in Madrid: my mother needs a confeſſor, and knows not to whom ſhe ſhould apply. We underſtand that you never quit the abbey, and, alas! my poor mother is unable to come hither! If you would have the goodneſs, reverend father,

to

to name a proper perſon, whoſe wiſe and pious conſolations may ſoften the agonies of my parent's death-bed, you will confer an everlaſting favour upon hearts not ungrateful."

With this petition alſo the monk complied. Indeed, what petition would he have refuſed, if urged in ſuch enchanting accents? The ſuppliant was ſo intereſting! Her voice was ſo ſweet, ſo harmonious! Her very tears became her, and her affliction ſeemed to add new luſtre to her charms. He promiſed to ſend to her a confeſſor that ſame evening, and begged her to leave her addreſs. The companion preſented him with a card on which it was written, and then withdrew with the fair petitioner, who pronounced before her departure a thouſand benedictions on the abbot's goodneſs. His eyes followed her out of the chapel. It was not till ſhe was out of ſight that he examined the card, on which he read the following words:

"Donna Elvira Dalfa, ſtrada di San Iago,

Iago, four doors from the palace d'Albornos."

The ſuppliant was no other than Antonia, and Leonella was her companion. The latter had not conſented without difficulty to accompany her niece to the abbey: Ambroſio had inſpired her with ſuch awe, that ſhe trembled at the very ſight of him. Her fears had conquered even her natural loquacity, and while in his preſence ſhe uttered not a ſingle ſyllable.

The monk retired to his cell, whither he was purſued by Antonia's image. He felt a thouſand new emotions ſpringing in his boſom, and he trembled to examine into the cauſe which gave them birth. They were totally different from thoſe inſpired by Matilda, when ſhe firſt declared her ſex and her affection. He felt not the provocation of luſt; no voluptuous deſires rioted in his boſom; nor did a burning imagination picture to him the charms which modeſty had veiled from his eyes. On the contrary, what he now felt was a mingled ſentiment

of

of tenderneſs, admiration, and reſpect. A ſoft and delicious melancholy infuſed itſelf into his ſoul, and he would not have exchanged it for the moſt lively tranſports of joy. Society now diſguſted him: he delighted in ſolitude, which permitted his indulging the viſions of fancy: his thoughts were all gentle, ſad, and ſoothing; and the whole wide world preſented him with no other object than Antonia.

"Happy man!" he exclaimed in his romantic enthuſiaſm, "happy man, who is deſtined to poſſeſs the heart of that lovely girl! what delicacy in her features! what elegance in her form! how enchanting was the timid innocence of her eyes! and how different from the wanton expreſſion, the wild luxurious fire, which ſparkles in Matilda's! Oh! ſweeter muſt one kiſs be, ſnatched from the roſy lips of the firſt, than all the full and luſtful favours beſtowed ſo freely by the ſecond. Matilda gluts me with enjoyment even to loathing, forces me to her arms, apes the harlot, and glories in

her proſtitution. Diſguſting! Did ſhe know the inexpreſſible charm of modeſty, how irreſiſtiby it enthrals the heart of man, how firmly it chains him to the throne of beauty, ſhe never would have thrown it off. What would be too dear a price for this lovely girl's affections? What would I refuſe to ſacrifice, could I be releaſed from my vows, and permitted to declare my love in the ſight of earth and heaven? While I ſtrove to inſpire her with tenderneſs, with friendſhip and eſteem, how tranquil and undiſturbed would the hours roll away! Gracious God! to ſee her blue downcaſt eyes beam upon mine with timid fondneſs! to ſit for days, for years, liſtening to that gentle voice! to acquire the right of obliging her, and hear the artleſs expreſſions of her gratitude! to watch the emotions of her ſpotleſs heart! to encourage each dawning virtue! to ſhare in her joy when happy, to kiſs away her tears when diſtreſſed, and to ſee her fly to my arms for comfort and ſupport! Yes; if there is perfect

fect bliſs on earth, 'tis his lot alone who becomes that angel's huſband."

While his fancy coined theſe ideas, he paced his cell with a diſordered air. His eyes were fixed upon vacancy: his head reclined upon his ſhoulder: a tear rolled down his cheek, while he reflected that the viſion of happineſs for him could never be realized.

"She is loſt to me;" he continued, "by marriage ſhe cannot be mine: and to ſeduce ſuch innocence, to uſe the confidence repoſed in me to work her ruin——Oh! it would be a crime, blacker than yet the world ever witneſſed! Fear not, lovely girl! your virtue runs no riſque from me. Not for Indies would I make that gentle boſom know the tortures of remorſe."

Again he paced his chamber haſtily. Then ſtopping, his eye fell upon the picture of his once-admired Madona. He tore it with indignation from the wall: he threw it on the ground, and ſpurned it from him with his foot.

"The proſtitute!"

Unfortunate Matilda! her paramour forgot, that for his ſake alone ſhe had forfeited her claim to virtue; and his only reaſon for deſpiſing her was, that ſhe had loved him much too well.

He threw himſelf into a chair, which ſtood near the table. He ſaw the card with Elvira's addreſs. He took it up, and it brought to his recollection his promiſe reſpecting a confeſſor. He paſſed a few minutes in doubt: but Antonia's empire over him was already too much decided to permit his making a long reſiſtance to the idea which ſtruck him. He reſolved to be the confeſſor himſelf. He could leave the abbey unobſerved without difficulty: by wrapping up his head in his cowl he hoped to paſs through the ſtreets without being recogniſed: by taking theſe precautions, and by recommending ſecrecy to Elvira's family, he doubted not to keep Madrid in ignorance that he had broken his vow never to ſee the outſide of the abbey-walls.

Matilda

Matilda was the only perſon whoſe vigilance he dreaded: but by informing her at the refectory, that during the whole of that day buſineſs would confine him to his cell, he thought himſelf ſecure from her wakeful jealouſy. Accordingly, at the hours when the Spaniards are generally taking their ſieſta, he ventured to quit the abbey by a private door, the key of which was in his poſſeſſion. The cowl of his habit was thrown over his face: from the heat of the weather the ſtreets were almoſt totally deſerted: the monk met with few people, found the ſtrada di San Iago, and arrived without accident at Donna Elvira's door. He rang, was admitted, and immediately uſhered into an upper apartment.

It was here that he ran the greateſt riſque of a diſcovery. Had Leonella been at home, ſhe would have recognized him directly. Her communicative diſpoſition would never have permitted her to reſt, till all Madrid was informed that Ambroſio had ventured out of the abbey, and viſited

her ſiſter. Fortune here ſtood the monk's friend. On Leonella's return home, ſhe found a letter inſtructing her, that a couſin was juſt dead, who had left what little he poſſeſſed between herſelf and Elvira. To ſecure this bequeſt ſhe was obliged to ſet out for Cordova without loſing a moment. Amidſt all her foibles, her heart was truly warm and affectionate, and ſhe was unwilling to quit her ſiſter in ſo dangerous a ſtate. But Elvira inſiſted upon her taking the journey, conſcious that, in her daughter's forlorn ſituation, no increaſe of fortune, however trifling, ought to be neglected. Accordingly Leonella left Madrid, ſincerely grieved at her ſiſter's illneſs, and giving ſome few ſighs to the memory of the amiable but inconſtant Don Chriſtoval. She was fully perſuaded, that at firſt ſhe had made a terrible breach in his heart; but hearing nothing more of him, ſhe ſuppoſed that he had quitted the purſuit, diſguſted by the lowneſs of her origin, and knowing upon other terms than marriage he had nothing

thing to hope from ſuch a dragon of virtue as ſhe profeſſed herſelf; or elſe, that being naturally capricious and changeable, the remembrance of her charms had been effaced from the condé's heart by thoſe of ſome newer beauty. Whatever was the cauſe of her loſing him, ſhe lamented it ſorely. She ſtrove in vain, as ſhe aſſured every body who was kind enough to liſten to her, to tear his image from her too ſuſceptible heart. She affected the airs of a love-ſick virgin, and carried them all to the moſt ridiculous exceſs. She heaved lamentable ſighs, walked with her arms folded, uttered long ſoliloquies, and her diſcourſe generally turned upon ſome forſaken maid, who expired of a broken heart! Her fiery locks were always ornamented with a garland of willow. Every evening ſhe was ſeen ſtraying upon the banks of a rivulet by moonlight; and ſhe declared herſelf a violent admirer of murmuring ſtreams and nightingales——

"Of lonely haunts, and twilight groves,
"Places which pale paſſion loves!"

Such was the ſtate of Leonella's mind when obliged to quit Madrid. Elvira was out of patience at all theſe follies, and endeavoured at perſuading her to act like a reaſonable woman. Her advice was thrown away: Leonella aſſured her at parting, that nothing could make her forget the perfidious Don Chriſtoval. In this point ſhe was fortunately miſtaken. An honeſt youth of Cordova, journeyman to an apothecary, found that her fortune would be ſufficient to ſet him up in a genteel ſhop of his own. In conſequence of this reflection he avowed himſelf her admirer. Leonella was not inflexible; the ardour of his ſighs melted her heart, and ſhe ſoon conſented to make him the happieſt of mankind. She wrote to inform her ſiſter of her marriage; but, for reaſons which will be explained hereafter, Elvira never anſwered her letter.

Ambroſio

Ambroſio was conducted into the anti-chamber to that where Elvira was repoſing. The female domeſtic who had admitted him, left him alone, while ſhe announced his arrival to her miſtreſs. Antonia, who had been by her mother's bed-ſide, immediately came to him.

"Pardon me, father," ſaid ſhe, advancing towards him; when recognizing his features, ſhe ſtopped ſuddenly, and uttered a cry of joy. "Is it poſſible?" ſhe continued, "do not my eyes deceive me? Has the worthy Ambroſio broken through his reſolution, that he may ſoften the agonies of the beſt of women? What pleaſure will this viſit give my mother! Let me not delay for a moment the comfort which your piety and wiſdom will afford her."

Thus ſaying, ſhe opened the chamber-door, preſented to her mother her diſtinguiſhed viſitor, and, having placed an arm-chair by the ſide of the bed, withdrew into another apartment.

Elvira was highly gratified by this viſit:

her expectations had been raiſed high by general report, but ſhe found them far exceeded. Ambroſio, endowed by nature with powers of pleaſing, exerted them to the utmoſt, while converſing with Antonia's mother. With perſuaſive eloquence he calmed every fear, and diſſipated every ſcruple. He bade her reflect on the infinite mercy of her judge, deſpoiled death of his darts and terrors, and taught her to view without ſhrinking the abyſs of eternity, on whoſe brink ſhe then ſtood. Elvira was abſorbed in attention and delight; while ſhe liſtened to his exhortations, confidence and comfort ſtole inſenſibly into her mind. She unboſomed to him without heſitation her cares and apprehenſions. The latter reſpecting a future life he had already quieted, and he now removed the former, which ſhe felt for the concerns of this. She trembled for Antonia; ſhe had none to whoſe care ſhe could recommend her, ſave to the marquis de las Ciſternas, and her ſiſter Leonella. The protection of the one was very uncer-

tain;

tain; and as to the other, though fond of her niece, Leonella was ſo thoughtleſs and vain, as to make her an improper perſon to have the ſole direction of a girl ſo young and ignorant of the world. The friar no ſooner learned the cauſe of her alarms, than he begged her to make herſelf eaſy upon that head. He doubted not being able to ſecure for Antonia a ſafe refuge in the houſe of one of his penitents, the marchioneſs of Villa-Franca: this was a lady of acknowledged virtue, remarkable for ſtrict principles and extenſive charity. Should accident deprive her of this reſource, he engaged to procure Antonia a reception in ſome reſpectable convent, that is to ſay, in quality of boarder; for Elvira had declared herſelf no friend to a monaſtic life, and the monk was either candid or complaiſant enough to allow that her diſapprobation was not unfounded.

Theſe proofs of the intereſt which he felt for her, completely won Elvira's heart. In

thanking him, ſhe exhauſted every expreſſion which gratitude could furniſh, and proteſted, that now ſhe ſhould reſign herſelf with tranquillity to the grave. Ambroſio roſe to take leave; he promiſed to return the next day at the ſame hour, but requeſted that his viſits might be kept ſecret.

"I am unwilling," ſaid he, "that my breaking through a rule impoſed by neceſſity, ſhould be generally known. Had I not reſolved never to quit my convent, except upon circumſtances as urgent as that which has conducted me to your door, I ſhould be frequently ſummoned upon inſignificant occaſions; that time would be engroſſed by the curious, the unoccupied, and the fanciful, which I now paſs at the bed-ſide of the ſick, in comforting the expiring penitent, and clearing the paſſage to eternity from thorns."

Elvira commended equally his prudence and compaſſion, promiſing to conceal carefully

fully the honour of his viſits. The monk then gave her his benediction and retired from the chamber.

In the anti-room he found Antonia; he could not refuſe himſelf the pleaſure of paſſing a few moments in her ſociety. He bade her take comfort, for that her mother ſeemed compoſed and tranquil, and he hoped that ſhe might yet do well. He enquired who attended her, and engaged to ſend the phyſician of his convent to ſee her, one of the moſt ſkilful in Madrid. He then launched out in Elvira's commendation, praiſed her purity and fortitude of mind, and declared that ſhe had inſpired him with the higheſt eſteem and reverence. Antonia's innocent heart ſwelled with gratitude, joy danced in her eyes, where a tear ſtill ſparkled. The hopes which he gave her of her mother's recovery, the lively intereſt which he ſeemed to feel for her, and the flattering way in which ſhe was mentioned by him, added to the report of his judgment

judgment and virtue, and to the impreſſion made upon her by his eloquence, confirmed the favourable opinion with which his firſt appearance had inſpired Antonia. She replied with diffidence, but without reſtraint: ſhe feared not to relate to him all her little ſorrows, all her little fears and anxieties; and ſhe thanked him for his goodneſs with all the genuine warmth which favours kindle in a young and innocent heart. Such alone knows how to eſtimate benefits at their full value. They who are conſcious of mankind's perfidy and ſelfiſhneſs, ever receive an obligation with apprehenſion and diſguſt; they ſuſpect that ſome ſecret motive muſt lurk behind it; they expreſs their thanks with reſtraint and caution, and fear to praiſe a kind action to its full extent, aware that on ſome future day a return may be required. Not ſo Antonia—ſhe thought the world was compoſed only of thoſe who reſembled her; and that vice exiſted, was to her ſtill a ſecret. The monk had been of ſervice to her; he

ſaid

ſaid that he wiſhed her well; ſhe was grateful for his kindneſs, and thought that no terms were ſtrong enough to be the vehicle of her thanks. With what delight did Ambroſio liſten to the declaration of her artleſs gratitude! The natural grace of her manners, the unequalled ſweetneſs of her voice, her modeſt vivacity, her unſtudied elegance, her expreſſive countenance and intelligent eyes united to inſpire him with pleaſure and admiration; while the ſolidity and correctneſs of her remarks received additional beauty from the unaffected ſimplicity of the language in which they were conveyed.

Ambroſio was at length obliged to tear himſelf from this converſation, which poſſeſſed for him but too many charms. He repeated to Antonia his wiſhes, that his viſits ſhould not be made known; which deſire ſhe promiſed to obſerve. He then quitted the houſe, while his enchantreſs haſtened to her mother, ignorant of the miſchief which her beauty had cauſed. She was eager to

know

know Elvira's opinion of the man whom she had praised in such enthusiastic terms, and was delighted to find it equally favourable, if not even more so than her own.

"Even before he spoke," said Elvira, "I was prejudiced in his favour; the fervour of his exhortations, dignity of his manner, and closeness of his reasoning, were very far from inducing me to alter my opinion. His fine and full-toned voice struck me particularly; but surely, Antonia, I have heard it before. It seemed perfectly familiar to my ear; either I must have known the abbot in former times, or his voice bears a wonderful resemblance to that of some other, to whom I have often listened. There were certain tones which touched my very heart, and made me feel sensations so singular, that I strive in vain to account for them."

"My dearest mother, it produced the same effect upon me; yet certainly neither of us ever heard his voice till we came to Madrid. I suspect that what we attribute

to his voice, really proceeds from his pleaſant manners, which forbid our conſidering him as a ſtranger. I know not why, but I feel more at my eaſe while converſing with him, than I uſually do with people who are unknown to me. I feared not to repeat to him all my childiſh thoughts; and ſomehow I felt confident that he would hear my folly with indulgence. Oh! I was not deceived in him; he liſtened to me with ſuch an air of kindneſs and attention; he anſwered me with ſuch gentleneſs, ſuch condeſcenſion; he did not call me an infant, and treat me with contempt, as our croſs old confeſſor at the Caſtle uſed to do. I verily believe, that if I had lived in Murcia a thouſand years, I never ſhould have liked that fat old father Dominic!"

"I confeſs, that father Dominic had not the moſt pleaſing manners in the world; but he was honeſt, friendly, and well-meaning."

"Ah! my dear mother, thoſe qualities are ſo common——"

"God

"God grant, my child, that experience may not teach you to think them rare and precious! I have found them but too much ſo. But tell me, Antonia, why is it impoſſible for me to have ſeen the abbot before?"

"Becauſe, ſince the moment when he entered the abbey he has never been on the outſide of its walls. He told me juſt now, that from his ignorance of the ſtreets he had ſome difficulty to find the ſtrada di San Iago, though ſo near the abbey."

"All this is poſſible, and ſtill I may have ſeen him *before* he entered the abbey: in order to come out, it was rather neceſſary that he ſhould firſt go in."

"Holy virgin! as you ſay, that is very true.—Oh! But might he not have been born in the abbey?"

Elvira ſmiled.

"Why, not very eaſily."

"Stay, ſtay! Now I recollect how it was. He was put into the abbey quite a child; the common people ſay, that he fell from heaven,

heaven, and was ſent as a preſent to the Capuchins by the Virgin."

"That was very kind of her. And ſo he fell from heaven, Antonia? He muſt have had a terrible tumble."

"Many do not credit this; and I fancy, my dear mother, that I muſt number you among the unbelievers. Indeed, as our landlady told my aunt, the general idea is, that his parents, being poor, and unable to maintain him, left him juſt born at the abbey door; the late ſuperior, from pure charity, had him educated in the convent; and he proved to be a model of virtue, and piety, and learning, and I know not what elſe beſides. In conſequence, he was firſt received as a brother of the order, and not long ago was choſen abbot. However, whether this account or the other is the true one—at leaſt all agree, that when the monks took him under their care, he could not ſpeak; therefore you could not have heard his voice before he entered the

monaſtery.

monaſtery, becauſe at that time he had no voice at all."

"Upon my word, Antonia, you argue very cloſely; your concluſions are infallible. I did not ſuſpect you of being ſo able a logician."

"Ah! you are mocking me; but ſo much the better. It delights me to ſee you in ſpirits; beſides, you ſeem tranquil and eaſy, and I hope that you will have no more convulſions. Oh! I was ſure the abbot's viſit would do you good."

"It has indeed done me good, my child. He has quieted my mind upon ſome points which agitated me, and I already feel the effects of his attention. My eyes grow heavy, and I think I can ſleep a little. Draw the curtains, my Antonia: but if I ſhould not wake before midnight, do not ſit up with me, I charge you."

Antonia promiſed to obey her; and, having received her bleſſing, drew the curtains of the bed. She then ſeated herſelf in

ſilence

ſilence at her embroidery frame, and beguiled the hours with building caſtles in the air. Her ſpirits were enlivened by the evident change for the better in Elvira, and her fancy preſented her with viſions bright and pleaſing. In theſe dreams Ambroſio made no deſpicable figure. She thought of him with joy and gratitude: but for every idea which fell to the friar's ſhare, at leaſt two were unconſciouſly beſtowed upon Lorenzo. Thus paſſed the time, till the bell in the neighbouring ſteeple of the Capuchin cathedral announced the hour of midnight. Antonia remembered her mother's injunctions, and obeyed them, though with reluctance. She undrew the curtains with caution. Elvira was enjoying a profound and quiet ſlumber; her cheek glowed with health's returning colours: a ſmile declared that her dreams were pleaſant, and as Antonia bent over her ſhe fancied that ſhe heard her name pronounced. She kiſſed her mother's forehead ſoftly, and retired to her chamber; there ſhe knelt before a ſtatue of

St. Roſolia, her patroneſs; ſhe recommended herſelf to the protection of heaven, and, as had been her cuſtom from infancy, concluded her devotions by chaunting the following ſtanzas:

MIDNIGHT HYMN.

Now all is huſh'd; the ſolemn chime
No longer ſwells the nightly gale:
Thy awful preſence, hour ſublime,
With ſpotleſs heart once more I hail.

'Tis now the moment ſtill and dread,
When ſorcerers uſe their baleful power;
When graves give up their buried dead
To profit by the ſanctioned hour.

From guilt and guilty thoughts ſecure,
To duty and devotion true,
With boſom light and conſcience pure,
Repoſe, thy gentle aid I woo.

Good angels! take my thanks, that ſtill
The ſnares of vice I view with ſcorn;
Thanks, that to-night as free from ill
I ſleep, as when I woke at morn.

Yet may not my unconſcious breaſt
Harbour ſome guilt to me unknown?
Some wiſh impure, which unrepreſt
You bluſh to ſee, and I to own?

If

If ſuch there be, in gentle dream
Inſtruct my feet to ſhun the ſnare;
Bid truth upon my errors beam,
And deign to make me ſtill your care.

Chaſe from my peaceful bed away,
The witching ſpell, a foe to reſt,
The nightly goblin, wanton fay,
The ghoſt in pain, and fiend unbleſt.

Let not the tempter in mine ear
Pour leſſons of unhallowed joy;
Let not the night-mare, wandering near
My couch, the calm of ſleep deſtroy.

Let not ſome horrid dream affright
With ſtrange fantaſtic forms mine eyes;
But rather bid ſome viſion bright
Diſplay the bliſs of yonder ſkies.

Shew me the cryſtal domes of heaven,
The worlds of light where angels lie;
Shew me the lot to mortals given,
Who guiltleſs live, who guiltleſs die.

Then ſhew me how a ſeat to gain
Amidſt thoſe bliſsful realms of air;
Teach me to ſhun each guilty ſtain,
And guide me to the good and fair.

So

So every morn and night my voice
To heaven the grateful ſtrain ſhall raiſe;
In you as guardian powers rejoice,
Good angels! and exalt your praiſe.

So will I ſtrive, with zealous fire,
Each vice to ſhun, each fault correct:
Will love the leſſons you inſpire,
And prize the virtues you protect.

Then when at length, by high command,
My body ſeeks the grave's repoſe,
When death draws nigh with friendly hand,
My failing pilgrim-eyes to cloſe:

Pleas'd that my ſoul eſcapes the wreck,
Sighleſs will I my life reſign,
And yield to God my ſpirit back,
As pure as when it firſt was mine.

Having finiſhed her uſual devotions, Antonia retired to bed. Sleep ſoon ſtole over her ſenſes; and for ſeveral hours ſhe enjoyed that calm repoſe which innocence alone can know, and for which many a monarch with pleaſure would exchange his crown.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

——— Ah! how dark
These long-extended realms and rueful wastes;
Where nought but silence reigns, and night, dark night,
Dark as was chaos ere the infant sun
Was rolled together, or had tried its beams
Athwart the gloom profound! The sickly taper,
By glimmering through thy low-browed misty vaults
Furred round with mouldy damps and ropy slime,
Lets fall a supernumerary horror,
And only serves to make thy night more irksome!

BLAIR.

RETURNED undiscovered to the abbey, Ambrosio's mind was filled with the most pleasing images. He was wilfully blind to the danger of exposing himself to Antonia's charms: he only remembered the pleasure which her society had afforded him, and rejoiced in the prospect of that pleasure being repeated. He failed not to profit by Elvira's indisposition to obtain a

ſight of her daughter every day. At firſt he bounded his wiſhes to inſpire Antonia with friendſhip: but no ſooner was he convinced that ſhe felt that ſentiment in its fulleſt extent, than his aim became more decided, and his attentions aſſumed a warmer colour. The innocent familiarity with which ſhe treated him, encouraged his deſires. Grown uſed to her modeſty, it no longer commanded the ſame reſpect and awe: he ſtill admired it, but it only made him more anxious to deprive her of that quality which formed her principal charm. Warmth of paſſion, and natural penetration, of which latter, unfortunately both for himſelf and Antonia, he poſſeſſed an ample ſhare, ſupplied a knowledge of the arts of ſeduction. He eaſily diſtinguiſhed the emotions which were favourable to his deſigns, and ſeized every means with avidity of infuſing corruption into Antonia's boſom. This he found no eaſy matter. Extreme ſimplicity prevented her from perceiving the aim to which the monk's inſinuations tended; but the excellent morals

which ſhe owed to Elvira's care, the ſolidity and correctneſs of her underſtanding, and a ſtrong ſenſe of what was right, implanted in her heart by nature, made her feel that his precepts muſt be faulty. By a few ſimple words ſhe frequently overthrew the whole bulk of his ſophiſtical arguments, and made him conſcious how weak they were when oppoſed to virtue and truth. On ſuch occaſions he took refuge in his eloquence; he overpowered her with a torrent of philoſophical paradoxes, to which, not underſtanding them, it was impoſſible for her to reply; and thus, though he did not convince her that his reaſoning was juſt, he at leaſt prevented her from diſcovering it to be falſe. He perceived that her reſpect for his judgment augmented daily, and doubted not with time to bring her to the point deſired.

He was not unconſcious that his attempts were highly criminal. He ſaw clearly the baſeneſs of ſeducing the innocent girl; but his paſſion was too violent to permit his abandoning his deſign. He reſolved to

purſue it, let the conſequences be what they might. He depended upon finding Antonia in ſome unguarded moment; and ſeeing no other man admitted into her ſociety, nor hearing any mentioned either by her or by Elvira, he imagined that her young heart was ſtill unoccupied. While he waited for the opportunity of ſatisfying his unwarrantable luſt, every day increaſed his coldneſs for Matilda. Not a little was this occaſioned by the conſciouſneſs of his faults to her. To hide them from her, he was not ſufficiently maſter of himſelf; yet he dreaded leſt, in a tranſport of jealous rage, ſhe ſhould betray the ſecret on which his character and even his life depended. Matilda could not but remark his indifference: he was conſcious that ſhe remarked it, and, fearing her reproaches, ſhunned her ſtudiouſly. Yet, when he could not avoid her, her mildneſs might have convinced him that he had nothing to dread from her reſentment. She had reſumed the character of the gentle intereſting Roſario: ſhe taxed him not with ingratitude; but her eyes filled

ed with involuntary tears, and the ſoft melancholy of her countenance and voice uttered complaints far more touching than words could have conveyed. Ambroſio was not unmoved by her ſorrow; but, unable to remove its cauſe, he forbore to ſhow that it affected him. As her conduct convinced him that he needed not fear her vengeance, he continued to neglect her, and avoided her company with care. Matilda ſaw that ſhe in vain attempted to regain his affections; yet ſhe ſtifled the impulſe of reſentment, and continued to treat her inconſtant lover with her former fondneſs and affection.

By degrees Elvira's conſtitution recovered itſelf. She was no longer troubled with convulſions, and Antonia ceaſed to tremble for her mother. Ambroſio beheld this reeſtabliſhment with diſpleaſure. He ſaw that Elvira's knowledge of the world would not be the dupe of his ſanctified demeanour, and that ſhe would eaſily perceive his views upon her daughter. He reſolved therefore,

before ſhe quitted her chamber, to try the extent of his influence over the innocent Antonia.

One evening, when he had found Elvira almoſt perfectly reſtored to health, he quitted her earlier than was his uſual cuſtom. Not finding Antonia in the antichamber, he ventured to follow her to her own. It was only ſeparated from her mother's by a cloſet, in which Flora, the waiting-woman, generally ſlept. Antonia ſat upon a ſopha with her back towards the door, and read attentively. She heard not his approach, till he had ſeated himſelf by her. She ſtarted, and welcomed him with a look of pleaſure: then riſing, ſhe would have conducted him to the ſitting-room; but Ambroſio, taking her hand, obliged her by gentle violence to reſume her place. She complied without difficulty: ſhe knew not that there was more impropriety in converſing with him in one room than another. She thought herſelf equally ſecure of his principles and her own; and having replaced

herſelf

herſelf upon the ſopha, ſhe began to prattle to him with her uſual eaſe and vivacity.

He examined the book which ſhe had been reading, and had now placed upon the table. It was the Bible.

"How!" ſaid the friar to himſelf, "Antonia reads the Bible, and is ſtill ſo ignorant?"

But, upon a further inſpection, he found that Elvira had made exactly the ſame remark. That prudent mother, while ſhe admired the beauties of the ſacred writings, was convinced that, unreſtricted, no reading more improper could be permitted a young woman. Many of the narratives can only tend to excite ideas the worſt calculated for a female breaſt: every thing is called plainly and roundly by its name; and the annals of a brothel would ſcarcely furniſh a greater choice of indecent expreſſions. Yet this is the book which young women are recommended to ſtudy, which is put into the hands of children, able to

comprehend little more than thoſe paſſages of which they had better remain ignorant, and which but too frequently inculcates the firſt rudiments of vice, and gives the firſt alarm to the ſtill ſleeping paſſions. Of this was Elvira ſo fully convinced, that ſhe would have preferred putting into her daughter's hands "*Amadis de Gaul*," or "*The Valiant Champion, Tirante the White*; and would ſooner have authoriſed her ſtudying the lewd exploits of *Don Galaor*, or the laſcivious jokes of the *Damſel Plazer di mi vida*. She had in conſequence made two reſolutions reſpecting the Bible. The firſt was, that Antonia ſhould not read it till ſhe was of an age to feel its beauties, and profit by its morality. The ſecond, that it ſhould be copied out with her own hand, and all improper paſſages either altered or omitted. She had adhered to this determination, and ſuch was the Bible which Antonia was reading: it had been lately delivered to her, and ſhe peruſed it with an avidity, with a delight that was in-

expreſſible.

expreſſible. Ambroſio perceived his miſtake, and replaced the book upon the table.

Antonia ſpoke of her mother's health with all the enthuſiaſtic joy of a youthful heart.

"I admire your filial affection," ſaid the abbot; "it proves the excellence and ſenſibility of your character; it promiſes a treaſure to him whom Heaven has deſtined to poſſeſs your affections. The breaſt ſo capable of fondneſs for a parent, what will it feel for a lover? Nay, perhaps, what feels it for one even now? Tell me, my lovely daughter, have you known what it is to love? Anſwer me with ſincerity: forget my habit, and conſider me only as a friend."

"What it is to love?" ſaid ſhe, repeating his queſtion. "Oh! yes, undoubtedly; I have loved many, many people."

"That is not what I mean. The love of which I ſpeak can be felt only for one.

Have you never ſeen the man whom you wiſhed to be your huſband?"

"Oh! no, indeed!"

This was an untruth, but ſhe was unconſcious of its falſehood: ſhe knew not the nature of her ſentiments for Lorenzo; and never having ſeen him ſince his firſt viſit to Elvira, with every day his image grew leſs feebly impreſſed upon her boſom: beſides, ſhe thought of an huſband with all a virgin's terror, and negatived the friar's demand without a moment's heſitation.

"And do you not long to ſee that man, Antonia? Do you feel no void in your heart, which you fain would have filled up? Do you heave no ſighs for the abſence of ſome one dear to you, but who that ſome one is you know not? Perceive you not that what formerly could pleaſe, has charms for you no longer? that a thouſand new wiſhes, new ideas, new ſenſations, have ſprung in your boſom, only to be felt, never to be deſcribed? Or, while you fill every

other

other heart with paſſion, is it poſſible that your own remains inſenſible and cold? It cannot be! That melting eye, that bluſhing cheek, that enchanting voluptuous melancholy which at times overſpreads your features—all theſe marks belie your words: you love, Antonia, and in vain would hide it from me."

"Father, you amaze me! What is this love of which you ſpeak? I neither know its nature, nor, if I felt it, why I ſhould conceal the ſentiment."

"Have you ſeen no man, Antonia, whom, though never ſeen before, you ſeemed long to have ſought? whoſe form, though a ſtranger's, was familiar to your eyes? the ſound of whoſe voice ſoothed you, pleaſed you, penetrated to your very ſoul? in whoſe preſence you rejoiced, for whoſe abſence you lamented? with whom your heart ſeemed to expand, and in whoſe boſom, with confidence unbounded, you repoſed the cares of your own? Have you not felt all this, Antonia?"

"Certainly I have: the first time that I saw you, I felt it."

Ambrosio started. Scarcely dared he credit his hearing.

"Me, Antonia?" he cried, his eyes sparkling with delight and impatience, while he seized her hand, and pressed it rapturously to his lips. "Me, Antonia? You felt these sentiments for me?"

"Even with more strength than you have described. The very moment that I beheld you, I felt so pleased, so interested! I waited so eagerly to catch the sound of your voice; and, when I heard it, it seemed so sweet! it spoke to me a language till then so unknown! Methought it told me a thousand things which I wished to hear! It seemed as if I had long known you; as if I had a right to your friendship, your advice, and your protection. I wept when you departed, and longed for the time which should restore you to my sight."

"Antonia! my charming Antonia!" exclaimed the monk, and caught her to his

his boſom: "Can I believe my ſenſes? Repeat it to me, my ſweet girl! Tell me again that you love me, that you love me truly and tenderly!"

"Indeed, I do: let my mother be excepted, and the world holds no one more dear to me."

At this frank avowal Ambroſio no longer poſſeſſed himſelf: wild with deſire, he claſped the bluſhing trembler in his arms. He faſtened his lips greedily upon hers, ſucked in her pure delicious breath, violated with his bold hand the treaſures of her boſom, and wound around him her ſoft and yielding limbs. Startled, alarmed, and confuſed at his action, ſurpriſe at firſt deprived her of the power of reſiſtance. At length recovering herſelf, ſhe ſtrove to eſcape from his embrace.

"Father!—Ambroſio!" ſhe cried, "releaſe me, for God's ſake!"

But the licentious monk heeded not her prayers: he perſiſted in his deſign, and proceeded to take ſtill greater liberties.

Antonia

Antonia prayed, wept, and ſtruggled; terrified to the extreme, though at what ſhe knew not, ſhe exerted all her ſtrength to repulſe the friar, and was on the point of ſhrieking for aſſiſtance, when the chamber-door was ſuddenly thrown open. Ambroſio had juſt ſufficient preſence of mind to be ſenſible of his danger. Reluctantly he quitted his prey, and ſtarted haſtily from the couch. Antonia uttered an exclamation of joy, flew towards the door, and found herſelf claſped in the arms of her mother.

Alarmed at ſome of the abbot's ſpeeches, which Antonia had innocently repeated, Elvira reſolved to aſcertain the truth of her ſuſpicions. She had known enough of mankind, not to be impoſed upon by the monk's reputed virtue. She reflected on ſeveral circumſtances, which, though trifling, on being put together ſeemed to authorize her fears. His frequent viſits, which, as far as ſhe could ſee, were confined to her family; his evident emotion, whenever ſhe

ſpoke

ſpoke of Antonia; his being in the full prime and heat of manhood; and above all, his pernicious philoſophy communicated to her by Antonia, and which accorded but ill with his converſation in her preſence; all theſe circumſtances inſpired her with doubts reſpecting the purity of Ambroſio's friendſhip. In conſequence ſhe reſolved, when he ſhould next be alone with Antonia, to endeavour at ſurpriſing him. Her plan had ſucceeded. 'Tis true, that when ſhe entered the room, he had already abandoned his prey; but the diſorder of her daughter's dreſs, and the ſhame and confuſion ſtamped upon the friar's countenance, ſufficed to prove that her ſuſpicions were but too well founded. However, ſhe was too prudent to make thoſe ſuſpicions known. She judged, that to unmaſk the impoſtor would be no eaſy matter, the public being ſo much prejudiced in his favour: and having but few friends, ſhe thought it dangerous to make herſelf ſo powerful an enemy. She affected

therefore

therefore not to remark his agitation, ſeated herſelf tranquilly upon the ſopha, aſſigned ſome trifling reaſon for having quitted her room unexpectedly, and converſed on various ſubjects with ſeeming confidence and eaſe.

Re-aſſured by her behaviour, the monk began to recover himſelf. He ſtrove to anſwer Elvira without appearing embarraſſed: but he was ſtill too great a novice in diſſimulation, and he felt that he muſt look confuſed and awkward. He ſoon broke off the converſation, and roſe to depart. What was his vexation when, on taking leave, Elvira told him, in polite terms, that being now perfectly re-eſtabliſhed, ſhe thought it an injuſtice to deprive others of his company who might be more in need of it! She aſſured him of her eternal gratitude, for the benefit which during her illneſs ſhe had derived from his ſociety and exhortations: and ſhe lamented that her domeſtic affairs, as well as the multitude of buſineſs which his ſituation muſt of neceſſity impoſe

upon

upon him, would in future deprive her of the pleaſure of his viſits. Though delivered in the mildeſt language, this hint was too plain to be miſtaken. Still he was preparing to put in a remonſtrance, when an expreſſive look from Elvira ſtopped him ſhort. He dared not preſs her to receive him, for her manner convinced him that he was diſcovered: he ſubmitted without reply, took an haſty leave, and retired to the abbey, his heart filled with rage and ſhame, with bitterneſs and diſappointment.

Antonia's mind felt relieved by his departure; yet ſhe could not help lamenting that ſhe was never to ſee him more. Elvira alſo felt a ſecret ſorrow: ſhe had received too much pleaſure from thinking him her friend, not to regret the neceſſity of changing her opinion; but her mind was too much accuſtomed to the fallacy of worldly friendſhips to permit her preſent diſappointment to weigh upon it long. She now endeavoured to make her daughter aware of the riſk which ſhe had run: but ſhe was

obliged

obliged to treat the ſubject with caution, leſt, in removing the bandage of ignorance, the veil of innocence ſhould be rent away. She therefore contented herſelf with warning Antonia to be upon her guard, and ordering her, ſhould the abbot perſiſt in his viſits, never to receive them but in company. With this injunction Antonia promiſed to comply.

Ambroſio haſtened to his cell. He cloſed the door after him, and threw himſelf upon the bed in deſpair. The impulſe of deſire, the ſtings of diſappointment, the ſhame of detection, and the fear of being publicly unmaſked, rendered his boſom a ſcene of the moſt horrible confuſion. He knew not what courſe to purſue. Debarred the preſence of Antonia, he had no hopes of ſatisfying that paſſion which was now become a part of his exiſtence. He reflected that his ſecret was in a woman's power: he trembled with apprehenſion when he beheld the precipice before him, and with rage when he thought that, had it not been

for

for Elvira, he ſhould now have poſſeſſed the object of his deſires. With the direſt imprecations he vowed vengeance againſt her: he ſwore that, coſt what it would, he ſtill would poſſeſs Antonia. Starting from the bed, he paced the chamber with diſordered ſteps, howled with impotent fury, daſhed himſelf violently againſt the walls, and indulged all the tranſports of rage and madneſs.

He was ſtill under the influence of this ſtorm of paſſions, when he heard a gentle knock at the door of his cell. Conſcious that his voice muſt have been heard, he dared not refuſe admittance to the importuner. He ſtrove to compoſe himſelf, and to hide his agitation. Having in ſome degree ſucceeded, he drew back the bolt: the door opened, and Matilda appeared.

At this preciſe moment there was no one with whoſe preſence he could better have diſpenſed. He had not ſufficient command over himſelf to conceal his vexation. He ſtarted back, and frowned.

"I am

"I am buſy," ſaid he in a ſtern and haſty tone; "leave me."

Matilda heeded him not: ſhe again faſtened the door, and then advanced towards him with an air gentle and ſupplicating.

"Forgive me, Ambroſio," ſaid ſhe; "for your own ſake I muſt not obey you. Fear no complaints from me; I come not to reproach you with your ingratitude. I pardon you from my heart; and ſince your love can no longer be mine, I requeſt the next beſt gift, your confidence and friendſhip. We cannot force our inclinations; the little beauty which you once ſaw in me has periſhed with its novelty; and if it can no longer excite deſire, mine is the fault, not yours. But why perſiſt in ſhunning me? why ſuch anxiety to fly my preſence? You have ſorrows, but will not permit me to ſhare them; you have diſappointments, but will not accept my comfort; you have wiſhes, but forbid my aiding your purſuits. 'Tis of this which I complain, not of your indifference to my perſon. I have given up

up the claims of the miſtreſs, but nothing ſhall prevail on me to give up thoſe of the friend."

"Generous Matilda!" he replied, taking her hand, "how far do you riſe ſuperior to the foibles of your ſex! Yes, I accept your offer. I have need of an adviſer, and a confident: in you I find every needful quality united. But to aid my purſuits ——Ah! Matilda, it lies not in your power!"

"It lies in no one's power but mine. Ambroſio, your ſecret is none to me: your every ſtep, your every action has been obſerved by my attentive eye. You love."

"Matilda!"

"Why conceal it from me? Fear not the little jealouſy which taints the generality of women: my ſoul diſdains ſo deſpicable a paſſion. You love, Ambroſio; Antonia Dalfa is the object of your flame. I know every circumſtance reſpecting your paſſion. Every converſation has been repeated to me. I have been informed of

your

your attempt to enjoy Antonia's perſon, your diſappointment, and diſmiſſion from Elvira's houſe. You now deſpair of poſſeſſing your miſtreſs; but I come to revive your hopes, and point out the road to ſucceſs."

"To ſucceſs? Oh! impoſſible."

"To thoſe who dare, nothing is impoſſible. Rely upon me, and you may yet be happy. The time is come, Ambroſio, when regard for your comfort and tranquillity compels me to reveal a part of my hiſtory, with which you are ſtill unacquainted. Liſten, and do not interrupt me. Should my confeſſion diſguſt you, remember that in making it my ſole aim is to ſatisfy your wiſhes, and reſtore that peace to your heart which at preſent has abandoned it. I formerly mentioned, that my guardian was a man of uncommon knowledge. He took pains to inſtil that knowledge into my infant mind. Among the various ſciences which curioſity had induced him to explore, he neglected not that which by

moſt

moſt is eſteemed impious, and by many chimerical: I ſpeak of thoſe arts which relate to the world of ſpirits. His deep reſearches into cauſes and effects, his unwearied application to the ſtudy of natural philoſophy, his profound and unlimited knowledge of the properties and virtues of every gem which enriches the deep, of every herb which the earth produces, at length procured him the diſtinction which he had ſought ſo long, ſo earneſtly. His curioſity was fully ſlaked, his ambition amply gratified. He gave laws to the elements: he could reverſe the order of nature: his eye read the mandates of futurity, and the infernal ſpirits were ſubmiſſive to his commands. Why ſhrink you from me? I underſtand that enquiring look. Your ſuſpicions are right, though your terrors are unfounded. My guardian concealed not from me his moſt precious acquiſition. Yet, had I never ſeen *you*, I ſhould never have exerted my power. Like you, I ſhuddered at the thoughts of magic. Like you,

I had

I had formed a terrible idea of the conſequences of raiſing a dæmon. To preſerve that life which your love had taught me to prize, I had recourſe to means which I trembled at employing. You remember that night which I paſſed in St. Clare's ſepulchre? Then was it that, ſurrounded by mouldering bodies, I dared to perform thoſe myſtic rites, which ſummoned to my aid a fallen angel. Judge what muſt have been my joy at diſcovering that my terrors were imaginary. I ſaw the dæmon obedient to my orders: I ſaw him trembling at my frown; and found that, inſtead of ſelling my ſoul to a maſter, my courage had purchaſed for myſelf a ſlave."

"Raſh Matilda! What have you done? You have doomed yourſelf to endleſs perdition; you have bartered for momentary power eternal happineſs! If on witchcraft depends the fruition of my deſires, I renounce your aid moſt abſolutely. The conſequences are too horrible. I dote upon Antonia, but am not ſo blinded by luſt,

luſt, as to ſacrifice for her enjoyment my exiſtence both in this world and in the next."

"Ridiculous prejudices! Oh! bluſh, Ambroſio, bluſh at being ſubjected to their dominion. Where is the riſque of accepting my offers? What ſhould induce my perſuading you to this ſtep, except the wiſh of reſtoring you to happineſs and quiet? If there is danger, it muſt fall upon me. It is I who invoke the miniſtry of the ſpirits: mine therefore will be the crime, and yours the profit; but danger there is none. The enemy of mankind is my ſlave, not my ſovereign. Is there no difference between giving and receiving laws, between ſerving and commanding? Awake from your idle dreams, Ambroſio! throw from you theſe terrors ſo ill ſuited to a ſoul like yours; leave them for common men, and dare to be happy! Accompany me this night to St. Clare's ſepulchre; there witneſs my incantations, and Antonia is your own."

"To obtain her by ſuch means, I neither can nor will. Ceaſe then to perſuade me, for I dare not employ hell's agency."

"You *dare* not? How have you deceived me! That mind which I eſteemed ſo great and valiant, proves to be feeble, puerile, and grovelling, a ſlave to vulgar errors, and weaker than a woman's."

"What? Though conſcious of the danger, wilfully ſhall I expoſe myſelf to the ſeducer's arts? Shall I renounce for ever my title to ſalvation? Shall my eyes ſeek a ſight which I know will blaſt them? No, no, Matilda, I will not ally myſelf with God's enemy."

"Are you then God's friend at preſent? Have you not broken your engagements with him, renounced his ſervice, and abandoned yourſelf to the impulſe of your paſſions? Are you not planning the deſtruction of innocence, the ruin of a creature whom he formed in the mould of angels? If not of dæmons, whoſe aid would you invoke to forward this laudable deſign? Will

the ſeraphims protect it, conduct Antonia to your arms, and ſanction with their miniſtry your illicit pleaſures? Abſurd! But I am not deceived, Ambroſio! It is not virtue which makes you reject my offer; you *wou'd* accept it, but you *dare* not. 'Tis not the crime which holds your hand, but the puniſhment; 'tis not reſpect for God which reſtrains you, but the terror of his vengeance! Fain would you offend him in ſecret, but you tremble to profeſs yourſelf his foe. Now ſhame on the coward ſoul, which wants the courage either to be a firm friend, or an open enemy!"

"To look upon guilt with horror, Matilda, is in itſelf a merit: in this reſpect I glory to confeſs myſelf a coward. Though my paſſions have made me deviate from her laws, I ſtill feel in my heart an innate love of virtue. But it ill becomes you to tax me with my perjury; you who firſt ſeduced me to violate my vows; you who firſt rouſed my ſleeping vices, made me feel the weight of religion's chains, and bade me

be convinced that guilt had pleaſures. Yet though my principles have yielded to the force of temperament, I ſtill have ſufficient grace to ſhudder at ſorcery, and avoid a crime ſo monſtrous, ſo unpardonable!"

"Unpardonable, ſay you? Where then is your conſtant boaſt of the Almighty's infinite mercy? Has he of late ſet bounds to it? Receives he no longer a ſinner with joy? You injure him, Ambroſio; you will always have time to repent, and he have goodneſs to forgive. Afford him a glorious opportunity to exert that goodneſs: the greater your crime, the greater his merit in pardoning. Away then with theſe childiſh ſcruples; be perſuaded to your good, and follow me to the ſepulchre."

"Oh! ceaſe, Matilda! That ſcoffing tone, that bold and impious language is horrible in every mouth, but moſt ſo in a woman's. Let us drop a converſation which excites no other ſentiments than horror and diſguſt. I will not follow you to the ſepulchre, or accept the ſervices of your

your infernal agents. Antonia ſhall be mine, but mine by human means."

"Then yours ſhe will never be! You are baniſhed her preſence; her mother has opened her eyes to your deſigns, and ſhe is now upon her guard againſt them. Nay, more, ſhe loves another; a youth of diſtinguiſhed merit poſſeſſes her heart; and unleſs you interfere, a few days will make her his bride. This intelligence was brought me by my inviſible ſervants, to whom I had recourſe on firſt perceiving your indifference. They watched your every action, related to me all that paſſed at Elvira's, and inſpired me with the idea of favouring your deſigns. Their reports have been my only comfort. Though you ſhunned my preſence, all your proceedings were known to me; nay, I was conſtantly with you in ſome degree, thanks to this moſt precious gift!"

With theſe words ſhe drew from beneath her habit a mirror of poliſhed ſteel, the

borders of which were marked with various ſtrange and unknown characters.

"Amidſt all my ſorrows, amidſt all my regrets for your coldneſs, I was ſuſtained from deſpair by the virtues of this taliſman. On pronouncing certain words, the perſon appears in it on whom the obſerver's thoughts are bent; thus, though *I* was exiled from *your* ſight, you, Ambroſio, were ever preſent to mine."

The friar's curioſity was ſtrongly excited.

"What you relate is incredible! Matilda, are you not amuſing yourſelf with my credulity?"

"Be your own eyes the judge."

She put the mirror into his hand. Curioſity induced him to take it, and love, to wiſh that Antonia might appear. Matilda pronounced the magic words. Immediately a thick ſmoke roſe from the characters traced upon the borders, and ſpread itſelf over the ſurface. It diſperſed again gradually; a confuſed mixture of colours and images

images preſented themſelves to the friar's eyes, which at length arranging themſelves in their proper places, he beheld in miniature Antonia's lovely form.

The ſcene was a ſmall cloſet belonging to her apartment. She was undreſſing to bathe herſelf. The long treſſes of her hair were already bound up. The amorous monk had full opportunity to obſerve the voluptuous contours and admirable ſymmetry of her perſon. She threw off her laſt garment, and, advancing to the bath prepared for her, put her foot into the water. It ſtruck cold, and ſhe drew it back again. Though unconſcious of being obſerved, an in-bred ſenſe of modeſty induced her to veil her charms; and ſhe ſtood heſitating upon the brink, in the attitude of the Venus de Medicis. At this moment a tame linnet flew towards her, neſtled its head between her breaſts, and nibbled them in wanton play. The ſmiling Antonia ſtrove in vain to ſhake off the bird, and at length raiſed her hands to drive it

from its delightful harbour. Ambroſio could bear no more. His deſires were worked up to phrenſy.

"I yield!" he cried, daſhing the mirror upon the ground: "Matilda, I follow you! Do with me what you will!"

She waited not to hear his conſent repeated. It was already midnight. She flew to her cell, and ſoon returned with her little baſket and the key of the cemetery, which had remained in her poſſeſſion ſince her firſt viſit to the vaults. She gave the monk no time for reflection.

"Come!" ſhe ſaid, and took his hand; "follow me, and witneſs the effects of your reſolve."

This ſaid, ſhe drew him haſtily along. They paſſed into the burying-ground unobſerved, opened the door of the ſepulchre, and found themſelves at the head of the ſubterraneous ſtair-caſe. As yet the beams of the full moon had guided their ſteps, but that reſource now failed them. Matilda had neglected to provide herſelf with a

lamp.

lamp. Still holding Ambroſio's hand ſhe deſcended the marble ſteps; but the profound obſcurity with which they were overſpread, obliged them to walk ſlow and cautiouſly.

"You tremble!" ſaid Matilda to her companion; "fear not, the deſtined ſpot is near."

They reached the foot of the ſtair-caſe, and continued to proceed, feeling their way along the walls. On turning a corner, ſuddenly they deſcried faint gleams of light, which ſeemed burning at a diſtance. Thither they bent their ſteps. The rays proceeded from a ſmall ſepulchral lamp which flamed unceaſingly before the ſtatue of St. Clare. It tinged with dim and cheerleſs beams the maſſy columns which ſupported the roof, but was too feeble to diſſipate the thick gloom in which the vaults above were buried.

Matilda took the lamp.

"Wait for me!" ſaid ſhe to the friar; "in a few moments I am here again."

With theſe words ſhe haſtened into one

of the paſſages which branched in various directions from this ſpot, and formed a ſort of labyrinth. Ambroſio was now left alone. Darkneſs the moſt profound ſurrounded him, and encouraged the doubts which began to revive in his boſom. He had been hurried away by the delirium of the moment. The ſhame of betraying his terrors, while in Matilda's preſence, had induced him to repreſs them; but, now that he was abandoned to himſelf, they reſumed their former aſcendancy. He trembled at the ſcene which he was ſoon to witneſs. He knew not how far the deluſions of magic might operate upon his mind: they poſſibly might force him to ſome deed, whoſe commiſſion would make the breach between himſelf and Heaven irreparable. In this fearful dilemma, he would have implored God's aſſiſtance, but was conſcious that he had forfeited all claim to ſuch protection.

Gladly would he have returned to the abbey; but as he had paſſed through innumerable caverns and winding paſſages, the

attempt

attempt of regaining the ſtairs was hopeleſs. His fate was determined; no poſſibility of eſcape preſented itſelf. He therefore combated his apprehenſions, and called every argument to his ſuccour, which might enable him to ſupport the trying ſcene with fortitude. He reflected, that Antonia would be the reward of his daring. He inflamed his imagination by enumerating her charms. He perſuaded himſelf, that (as Matilda had obſerved) he always ſhould have time ſufficient for repentance; and that, as he employed *her* aſſiſtance, not that of dæmons, the crime of ſorcery could not be laid to his charge. He had read much reſpecting witchcraft; he underſtood that, unleſs a formal act was ſigned renouncing his claim to ſalvation, Satan would have no power over him. He was fully determined not to execute any ſuch act, whatever threats might be uſed, or advantages held out to him.

Such were his meditations while waiting for Matilda. They were interrupted by a

low murmur, which ſeemed at no great diſtance from him. He was ſtartled—he liſtened. Some minutes paſſed in ſilence, after which the murmur was repeated. It appeared to the groaning of one in pain. In any other ſituation, this circumſtance would only have excited his attention and curioſity. In the preſent, his predominant ſenſation was that of terror. His imagination totally engroſſed by the ideas of ſorcery and ſpirits, he fancied that ſome unquiet ghoſt was wandering near him; or elſe that Matilda had fallen a victim to her preſumption, and was periſhing under the cruel fangs of the dæmons. The noiſe ſeemed not to approach, but continued to be heard at intervals. Sometimes it became more audible—doubtleſs, as the ſufferings of the perſon who uttered the groans became more acute and inſupportable. Ambroſio now and then thought that he could diſtinguiſh accents, and once in particular he was almoſt convinced that he heard a faint voice exclaim,

"God!

"God! Oh! God! No hope! No ſuccour!"

Yet deeper groans followed theſe words: they died away gradually, and univerſal ſilence again prevailed.

"What can this mean?" thought the bewildered monk.

At that moment an idea which flaſhed into his mind, almoſt petrified him with horror. He ſtarted, and ſhuddered at himſelf.

"Should it be poſſible!" He groaned involuntarily; "ſhould it but be poſſible; Oh! what a monſter am I!"

He wiſhed to reſolve his doubts, and to repair his fault, if it were not too late already. But theſe generous and compaſſionate ſentiments were ſoon put to flight by the return of Matilda. He forgot the groaning ſufferer, and remembered nothing but the danger and embarraſſment of his own ſituation. The light of the returning lamp gilded the walls, and in a few moments after Matilda ſtood beſide him.

She

She had quitted her religious habit: ſhe was now clothed in a long ſable robe, on which was traced in gold embroidery a variety of unknown characters: it was faſtened by a girdle of precious ſtones, in which was fixed a poniard. Her neck and arms were uncovered; in her hand ſhe bore a golden wand; her hair was looſe, and flowed wildly upon her ſhoulders; her eyes ſparkled with terrific expreſſion; and her whole demeanour was calculated to inſpire the beholder with awe and admiration.

"Follow me!" ſhe ſaid to the monk in a low and ſolemn voice; "all is ready!"

His limbs trembled while he obeyed her. She led him through various narrow paſſages; and on every ſide, as they paſſed along, the beams of the lamp diſplayed none but the moſt revolting objects; ſculls, bones, graves, and images whoſe eyes ſeemed to glare on them with horror and ſurpriſe. At length they reached a ſpacious cavern, whoſe lofty roof the eye ſought

in vain to diſcover. A profound obſcurity hovered through the void; damp vapours ſtruck cold to the friar's heart, and he liſtened ſadly to the blaſt while it howled along the lonely vaults. Here Matilda ſtopped. She turned to Ambroſio. His cheeks and lips were pale with apprehenſion. By a glance of mingled ſcorn and anger ſhe reproved his puſillanimity, but ſhe ſpoke not. She placed the lamp upon the ground near the baſket. She motioned that Ambroſio ſhould be ſilent, and began the myſterious rites. She drew a circle round him, another round herſelf; and then, taking a ſmall phial from the baſket, poured a few drops upon the ground before her. She bent over the place, muttered ſome indiſtinct ſentences, and immediately a pale ſulphurous flame aroſe from the ground. It increaſed by degrees, and at length ſpread its waves over the whole ſurface, the circles alone excepted in which ſtood Matilda and the monk. It then aſcended the huge columns of unhewn ſtone, glided along the roof,

roof, and formed the cavern into an immenſe chamber totally covered with blue trembling fire. It emitted no heat: on the contrary, the extreme chillneſs of the place ſeemed to augment with every moment. Matilda continued her incantations; at intervals ſhe took various articles from the baſket, the nature and name of moſt of which were unknown to the friar: but among the few which he diſtinguiſhed, he particularly obſerved three human fingers, and an agnus dei which ſhe broke in pieces. She threw them all into the flames which burned before her, and they were inſtantly conſumed.

The monk beheld her with anxious curioſity. Suddenly ſhe uttered a loud and piercing ſhriek. She appeared to be ſeized with an acceſs of delirium; ſhe tore her hair, beat her boſom, uſed the moſt frantic geſtures, and, drawing the poniard from her girdle, plunged it into her left arm. The blood guſhed out plentifully; and, as ſhe ſtood on the brink of the circle, ſhe

took care that it ſhould fall on the outſide. The flames retired from the ſpot on which the blood was pouring. A volume of dark clouds roſe ſlowly from the enſanguined earth, and aſcended gradually till it reached the vault of the cavern. At the ſame time a clap of thunder was heard, the echo pealed fearfully along the ſubterraneous paſſages, and the ground ſhook beneath the feet of the enchantreſs.

It was now that Ambroſio repented of his raſhneſs. The ſolemn ſingularity of the charm had prepared him for ſomething ſtrange and horrible. He waited with fear for the ſpirit's appearance, whoſe coming was announced by thunder and earthquakes. He looked wildly around him, expecting that ſome dreadful apparition would meet his eyes, the ſight of which would drive him mad. A cold ſhivering ſeized his body, and he ſunk upon one knee, unable to ſupport himſelf.

"He comes!" exclaimed Matilda in a joyful accent.

Ambroſio

Ambroſio ſtarted, and expected the dæmon with terror. What was his ſurpriſe when, the thunder ceaſing to roll, a full ſtrain of melodious muſic ſounded in the air! At the ſame time the cloud diſappeared, and he beheld a figure more beautiful than fancy's pencil ever drew. It was a youth ſeemingly ſcarce eighteen, the perfection of whoſe form and face was unrivalled. He was perfectly naked: a bright ſtar ſparkled upon his forehead, two crimſon wings extended themſelves from his ſhoulders, and his ſilken locks were confined by a band of many-coloured fires, which played round his head, formed themſelves into a variety of figures, and ſhone with a brilliance far ſurpaſſing that of precious ſtones. Circlets of diamonds were faſtened round his arms and ankles, and in his right hand he bore a ſilver branch imitating myrtle. His form ſhone with dazzling glory: he was ſurrounded by clouds of roſe-coloured light, and, at the moment that he appeared, a refreſhing air breathed

perfumes

perfumes through the cavern. Enchanted at a viſion ſo contrary to his expectations, Ambroſio gazed upon the ſpirit with delight and wonder: yet, however beautiful the figure, he could not but remark a wildneſs in the dæmon's eyes, and a myſterious melancholy impreſſed upon his features, betraying the fallen angel, and inſpiring the ſpectators with ſecret awe.

The muſic ceaſed. Matilda addreſſed herſelf to the ſpirit: ſhe ſpoke in a language unintelligible to the monk, and was anſwered in the ſame. She ſeemed to inſiſt upon ſomething which the dæmon was unwilling to grant. He frequently darted upon Ambroſio angry glances, and at ſuch times the friar's heart ſank within him. Matilda appeared to grow incenſed; ſhe ſpoke in a loud and commanding tone, and her geſtures declared that ſhe was threatening him with her vengeance. Her menaces had the deſired effect. The ſpirit ſank upon his knee, and with a ſubmiſſive air preſented to her the branch of myrtle. No

ſooner

ſooner had ſhe received it, than the muſic was again heard; a thick cloud ſpread itſelf over the apparition; the blue flames diſappeared, and total obſcurity reigned through the cave. The abbot moved not from his place: his faculties were all bound up in pleaſure, anxiety, and ſurpriſe. At length the darkneſs diſperſing, he perceived Matilda ſtanding near him in her religious habit, with the myrtle in her hand. No traces remained of the incantation, and the vaults were only illuminated by the faint rays of the ſepulchral lamp.

"I have ſucceeded," ſaid Matilda, "though with more difficulty than I ex-"pected." Lucifer, whom I ſummoned to my aſſiſtance, was at firſt unwilling to obey my commands: to enforce his compliance, I was conſtrained to have recourſe to my ſtrongeſt charms. They have produced the deſired effect, but I have engaged never more to invoke his agency in your favour. Beware then how you employ an opportunity which never will return. My magic

arts

arts will now be of no uſe to you: in future you can only hope for ſupernatural aid, by invoking the dæmons yourſelf, and accepting the conditions of their ſervice. This you will never do. You want ſtrength of mind to force them to obedience; and unleſs you pay their eſtabliſhed price, they will not be your voluntary ſervants. In this one inſtance they conſent to obey you; I offer you the means of enjoying your miſtreſs, and be careful not to loſe the opportunity. Receive this conſtellated myrtle: while you bear this in your hand, every door will fly open to you. It will procure you acceſs to-morrow night to Antonia's chamber: then breathe upon it thrice, pronounce her name, and place it upon her pillow. A death like ſlumber will immediately ſeize upon her, and deprive her of the power of reſiſting your attempts. Sleep will hold her till break of morning. In this ſtate you may ſatisfy your deſires without danger of being diſcovered; ſince, when daylight ſhall diſpel the effects of the enchant-

ment,

ment, Antonia will perceive her diſhonour, but be ignorant of the raviſher. Be happy then, my Ambroſio, and let this ſervice convince you that my friendſhip is diſintereſted and pure. The night muſt be near expiring: let us return to the abbey, leſt our abſence ſhould create ſurpriſe."

The abbot received the taliſman with ſilent gratitude. His ideas were too much bewildered by the adventures of the night, to permit his expreſſing his thanks audibly, or indeed as yet to feel the whole value of her preſent. Matilda took up her lamp and baſket, and guided her companion from the myſterious cavern. She reſtored the lamp to its former place, and continued her route in darkneſs till ſhe reached the foot of the ſtair-caſe. The firſt beams of the riſing ſun darting down it facilitated the aſcent. Matilda and the abbot haſtened out of the ſepulchre, cloſed the door after them, and ſoon regained the abbey's weſtern cloiſter. No one met them, and

they

they retired unobſerved to their reſpective cells.

The confuſion of Ambroſio's mind now began to appeaſe. He rejoiced in the fortunate iſſue of his adventure, and, reflecting upon the virtues of the myrtle, looked upon Antonia as already in his power. Imagination retraced to him thoſe ſecret charms betrayed to him by the enchanted mirror, and he waited with impatience for the approach of midnight.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM